

BEYOND CREATION SCIENCE



NEW COVENANT CREATION FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION

By Timothy P. Martin & Jeffrey L. Vaughn, PhD

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from
GENESIS TO REVELATION



TIMOTHY P. MARTIN
&
JEFFREY L. VAUGHN, PHD

APOCALYPTIC VISION PRESS
WHITEHALL, MT

Beyond Creation Science

New Covenant Creation from Genesis to Revelation

Third Edition Copyright © 2007

Timothy P. Martin & Jeffrey L. Vaughn

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First Edition © 2001

Apocalyptic Vision Press

P.O. Box 99

Whitehall, MT 59759

www.BeyondCreationScience.com

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Printed in the United States.

Cover art by James Robert Kessler

Cover design by Mark Chiacchira

Typesetting and layout design by Luis Lovelace

ISBN/EAN13: 978-0-9799147-0-6

Tim Martin dedicates this book to:

MAX SOTAK,

whose faithful labor in congregational ministry made this book possible. When I first met Max, my theology was limited to the two dimensions of bare propositions. Max taught me how to see creation as three dimensions of full-bodied theology.

What a difference!

Thanks, Max.

Jeff Vaughn dedicates this book to:

TOM VAUGHN,

on the eve of my own son's eighteenth birthday, I am now beginning to really understand what a father has meant to me.

Thanks, Dad.

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FOREWORD

NORMAN VOSS

Harbinger: *One that indicates or foreshadows what is to come; a forerunner.*

Can a family story be a modern-day harbinger of things to come? We live in a culture that looks for signs of things to come. Sometimes, those signs have been with us all along, illuminating paths that continue to be traveled. America has experimented with many religious and secular movements in this past century. I want to recount a family story which tells of paths that have been traveled, paths that await us all.

It is a story with which I am very familiar, along with its consequences. Every family story speaks of consequences, but not all bear the same spiritual impairment as my family story. My story is about two men; one born just before the turn of the 20th century and the other, his son, born during the Roaring Twenties. Clifton was my grandfather. Wade was my father.

They were born a generation apart, but it could have seemed like centuries with the rapid change taking place in America at the time. One was born into a Christian home in conservative 19th century America. The other was born during the rise of a new secular age. Clifton, my grandfather, diligently searched the Scriptures for answers. Wade, my father, diligently searched humanity for answers.

My father initially took to his Christian upbringing but left it when he came of age. This happened during World War 2, the years which overshadowed his rise from youth to manhood. My father rejected Grandpa Clifton's faith. Dad thought he rejected faith altogether, but he actually embraced a new faith: one which gained millions of adherents in the space of a few decades.

Why did my father reject the faith of my grandfather? I believe it was largely because he could not reconcile the Genesis story of creation he was taught as a child with what he learned from science. It's a tragic, yet prevalent story. I have a family story that tells the story of a civiliza-

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tion. My dad rejected God and he told me, after I embraced Christianity during my own coming of age, that he had no use for religion. I found his old copy of Darwin's *Origin of Species* one day while I was going through the attic of our abandoned farmhouse. I showed it to him, but he had already completed his use of it many years earlier. Now it was just another dusty relic he left behind, a memory of the point in life where he parted ways with his father's beliefs.

This is ironic because my grandfather was just as diligent in searching as my father was, perhaps even more so. Grandpa Clifton was extremely curious and chose to tackle the book of Revelation, with all its challenges, as his life's burning devotion. He eventually unlocked its mysteries as few men did in that century. He recognized that Revelation is tied to many Old Testament prophecies that were being fulfilled during the time of the New Testament. It became a passion that solved many problems troubling Christians even to this day. Grandpa Clifton left a lasting legacy by engraving into his tombstone a pictorial overview of his beliefs. I marvel at his foresight. He continues to teach his beliefs from the grave.

My grandfather chose to solve the riddle and he succeeded. My father chose to succumb to the Genesis challenge and moved on with life in his world where he believed God does not exist. Dad was a lot like Darwin in that he could not get past the religious dogma *about* what the Bible teaches of origins. The dogma, rather than the reality, molded his view and became an excuse for his unbelief.

The greatest irony of all is my Grandpa Clifton's studies in Revelation provided the keys to Genesis and quite possibly his own son's redemption. I believe Grandpa Clifton's views of Bible prophecy unlocked the problems with which his son struggled, some of the very same problems in Genesis that led my father to reject the Bible and Christianity along with it. But Grandpa Clifton never got that far since he concentrated primarily on the book of Revelation. It is now too late for my father. He never lived to see how his father's keys unlocked the book of Genesis.

The inability of Christians to grasp the meaning and message of both Genesis and Revelation create a great divide in America. Christians struggle with both the beginning and culmination of the Scriptures — the Alpha and the Omega as they might be called. Both Genesis and Revelation bring a lot of baggage with them to the American religious scene.

We have great division on end-times views stemming from misadventures into Revelation. Our confused teaching has scarred our cul-

Foreword

ture and created a religious society that has wasted immense energy preparing for the end of the world. The predictions have come and gone these past decades.

A few Christians are now ready, finally — at last, to leave behind the “Left Behind” mentality. Why? There have been too many false predictions. For some of us, they are hard to forget. Things got going with *The Late Great Planet Earth* in 1970. They heated up in 1987, and then we found it was really going to happen in 1988. Through the 90’s and even today we hear about the Middle East in prophecy. First, it was the Soviet Union. Then it was Saddam Hussein. Is it the European Union? Or is it Islam? The hot ticket for the Antichrist keeps changing hands. And who can forget Y2K? They have all come and gone and with them goes the credibility of tens of millions of Christians in America.

Genesis has been a more dangerous venture for some. Wrongly understood, it has the potential to undermine one’s faith in the God of creation. My father is just one of many who left the path of life because he could not reconcile its *perceived* problems with what he learned about this world.

I have been intrigued with Genesis for many years. My interest is due largely to my painful family story. But unlike my father, I have searched for answers and refused to give up.

You hold in your hands a book that offers a full picture of both ends of the story the Bible tells. You hold in your hands a book that brings together the story of origins with the story of redemption and provides the most complete and comprehensive understanding that I have ever seen in my decades of study. If my Grandpa Clifton had only understood that the keys he found in Revelation unlocked the confusion over Genesis, I might not be describing my dad’s past in this manner today. How many more stories out there today are like my family story? How many tomorrow?

If you want to understand the Bible from beginning to end, this book is for you. If you are at all concerned for how Christians in Western Civilization handle God’s Word in our day, from Genesis to Revelation, keep reading. The answers are coming.

— Norman Voss, 2007

INTRODUCTION

We will be honest with you from the start. Our goal is to challenge the way millions of Christians think about the beginning and the end of the Bible.

Two of the most controversial topics in the Church today pertain to the two ends of the Bible, Genesis and Revelation. They are controversial precisely because they are important. What Christians believe the Bible teaches about origins and prophecy is what Christians will teach about origins and prophecy. It is crucial, for the sake of the Christian gospel in the modern world, that Christians get the beginning and the end right. Who wants to believe nonsense just because Christians teach it?

We wrote this book because we are convinced that the majority of conservative Christians in America have got it wrong about both Genesis and Revelation. We say that as conservatives ourselves; this book is not another whining complaint against conservative Christianity penned by modern liberals. We believe the Bible is true. We believe the Bible can be understood through careful consideration, intelligent inquiry, due diligence, and effort. If we did not believe this, then we would not have written this book.

Our thesis is that the common mistakes Christians make regarding origins and prophecy are deeply connected. If the popular Christian view of the beginning is in error, then there is little hope that the popular Christian view of the end will be accurate. The reverse is also true.

We are optimistic about a coming change in the future because there is growing uneasiness among conservatives about current views of origins and prophecy. This book was written for Christians who have an interest in either topic. Some readers will have more interest in what we present about the beginning of the Bible. Others will have more interest in what we present about the end. If you have interest in both issues, then great! Whether or not you agree with all of our conclusions, we hope this book will stimulate you to think anew about the profound connection between origins and prophecy, the beginning and the end.

Meet the Authors

Before we talk about the content that fills the pages to come, we would like introduce ourselves and mention the history of this book.

In some respects, we are an odd pair to write a book together. Tim Martin lives in Montana with his wife, Amy, and their six children. Tim and Amy met for the first time in the summer of 1993 during the *Life Preparation Conference* hosted by American Vision in Atlanta, Georgia. Jeff Vaughn lives in the suburbs of Los Angeles with his wife, Karen, and their five children. We come from different church traditions. We live and work in different environments. It is our mutual interest in theology, prophecy, and the wonders of God's creation which made us partners in this project.

Tim's main interest and area of study is theology, biblical prophecy, and practical worldview Christianity. After he was home schooled for many years, Tim graduated from Bob Jones Academy in 1992. He studied Liberal Arts at Christ College (currently located in Lynchburg, Virginia) and spent three summers on staff at Summit Ministries in Manitou Springs, Colorado. He is currently active in congregational ministry at Covenant Community Church (www.truthinliving.org). Tim wrote the original edition of *Beyond Creation Science* in 2001 which focused on the relationship between New Testament prophecy and the Genesis flood.

Jeff is a professional scientist. He earned his PhD from the University of California and works in telescope optics. He has spent his life in conservative Restoration Movement churches, first the independent Christian Church and now the Church of Christ. Growing up with young-earth creationism, Jeff first learned there was a debate over creation in the Church from Hugh Ross around 1990. Jeff read a book by J. Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology of Victory*, in 1992. This book changed his end-times views. Within a short time, Jeff realized that the two issues of prophecy and creation are related, and has dedicated his theological study to developing a common and consistent view of both ends of the Bible.

Though we have different backgrounds, we also have much in common. Tim operates an established window cleaning business in southwest Montana. Jeff straightens out atmospheric distortions for telescopes. What do these two things have in common? Well, Tim and Jeff both help people see God's creation better! It is ironic, because that is

the end goal we have in mind for this book; our passion is to help people see God's creation better.

We have other things in common, too. Tim and Amy Martin were both home schooled for a portion of their education and now home school their six children. Jeff and Karen Vaughn are nearing completion of the home schooling of their five children. Another item you might find interesting is that this project began in earnest years before Tim and Jeff ever met in person. This book would not have been possible before the arrival of the information age; we did it primarily through the internet and e-mail. Modern technological progress made this book possible.

Meet the Book

The following pages are divided into three parts:

Chapters 1 through 4 offer a fresh investigation into what Jesus and the apostles taught about the great tribulation, last days, and coming of Christ. Part 1 also includes historical documentation from Josephus, the first century historian who provided detailed accounts of the Jewish War with Rome. This part of the book argues that, when understood within its own context, key elements of New Testament prophecy relate predominantly to what happened in the first century, particularly the Roman invasion of Judea and Jerusalem in AD 66-70.

Part 2 opens with a historical overview of how modern prophetic views impacted the rise of the current Genesis debate among Christians. This material is covered in Chapters 5 and 6. Once this background and contemporary scene is set, the implications of Part 1 are systematically explored as they relate to key areas of the Genesis debate: the Genesis flood — Chapters 7 through 9, the Tower of Babel incident — Chapter 10, the question of biological death and the fall — Chapters 11 and 12, and the nature, purpose, and meaning of Genesis creation — Chapters 13 through 18.

Chapters 19 through 21 are Part 3. This section focuses on the practical implications for Christian theology and worldview practice in the modern world. We discuss a biblical approach to the relationship between the Bible and science and offer a closing biblical presentation for a contextual understanding of biblical prophecy. Our final chapter explores the implications applied to a full Christian worldview for the future of Christian culture.

We have also included appendices which offer aid to the reader on key points. Our first appendix offers an explanation and defense for the

hermeneutic or interpretive approach we use throughout this book to understand what the Bible means by what it says. Another appendix deals with common objections to our view of Noah's flood. Our final appendix gives an overview of various old-earth views of creation that have been popular since the 18th century.

How to Read This Book

Be aware that this book is designed to be read sequentially from beginning to end. We highly recommend reading the book as it has been constructed. Following the order will help you understand the progression and development of our thoughts and conclusions.

This book was written differently from other Bible-Science or theology-prophecy books. This book attempts to *integrate* these two fields as they interact with history, philosophy and Christian world-view. Themes introduced in the opening chapters reappear and are expanded in later chapters.

Many books are written in a linear fashion much as a freight train is a compilation of box cars lined up one after the other on the tracks. Our book follows more of an incremental approach. Each section builds upon and reinforces the previous material. Rather than presenting the reader with a set of ideas and beliefs resembling a string of boxcars filled with ordered content designed to "move" information, our approach would be more akin to taking off in an airplane and circling higher in elevation to view a wide panorama of the multi-dimensional landscape below. The reader will not need to agree with our particular conclusions in order to see the relationships at issue in contemporary debates. We anticipate that many of our critics will actually agree with the logical parallels we develop. We offer something for everyone; even to those with whom we disagree.

A Group Effort

No project like this can be completed without the help of many individuals. We first thank our wives, Amy and Karen, for tolerating our long hours of research, writing, and conversation that went into this book. Their sacrifices have made this book possible.

We also thank Walt Hibbard who became an early advocate in spite of some criticism. The world needs more men like Walt Hibbard who stand on principle for the truth of God's Word no matter the cost.

We thank Virgil Vaduva for providing an online forum (Planetpreterist.com) where a wide variety of topics can be discussed openly in light of God's Word. Tim and Jeff first met at Planetpreterist.com many years ago. Thanks, Virgil, for all your tireless work maintaining the site, and thanks to the entire online community at Planetpreterist.com for the lively discussion which complemented our research.

We thank James Robert Kessler for his impressive artwork on the cover as well as the sketches used at the heading of each chapter. You can view more amazing artwork by Jim at www.InChristVictorious.com.

We thank Mike Beidler for his superb editing talent which took the quality of the manuscript farther than we thought possible. The readability of this book owes a great deal to Mike's many hours of tedious editing. We also thank Randy Sommer for his help on the final editing and Jack Gibbert for his work on the proof-reading.

We thank Mark Chiacchira for the cover design and layout. Thanks to his ability, we hope that you judge this book by the cover! We have worked hard to provide content inside that lives up to the high standard of workmanship that Mark models on the outside of the cover.

We thank Luis Lovelace for his efforts on the typesetting and index construction. His work has made this book a pleasure to read and more useful as a reference.

We thank Norman Voss for his intense dedication and support for this project over the years. His presence demonstrated to us the true potential for this project in real life.

We thank all of our reviewers who offered feedback and suggestions. Special thanks to: Don Stoner, John Holzmman, Terry Hall, Tami Jelinek, Jennifer, Rebecca and Victoria Vaughn, John Hedges, Mike Palevo, Rich Duncan, Andre and Missy Snitko, Sam and Bethel Wagner, Bo and Maggie Stuart, Dave Klem, Jesse Ahmann, Timothy King, Prescott and Ruth Wagner, Tony Pomales, Max Sotak, Mike Sullivan, Stephen Douglas, Dennis Zwonitzer, Mickey Denen, David Vaughn, Dennis Piilohla, Kevin Bywater, Aki Taniguchi, Patty Vaughn, Ron Wagner, Charles Shank, Jack Parry, Jay and Bernette Wagner, Ed Burley, David Snoke, and Robert Newman. This in no way suggests these individuals agree with any of the particular details or ultimate conclusions of our presentation. Thanks to Jane and Gabi at the Legion Street Grille in Whitehall, Montana, for all of the great food during Tim's initial work on the manuscript.

Tim gives special thanks to Steve and Donarae Wagner who provided office space, tools, and much more to make this project come together. And thanks, mom, for your support and encouragement.

Jeff gives a special thank you to Terry Brennan who introduced Jeff to Hugh Ross and Rob Dueck who introduced Jeff to J. Marcellus Kik.

We also thank our critics who have forced us to develop a fuller presentation. Samuel Frost and Kurt Simmons challenged us on many different levels. We could not have done it without them. The case in this book is thorough and comprehensive as a direct result of their criticisms and spirited opposition.

Further Discussion and Interaction

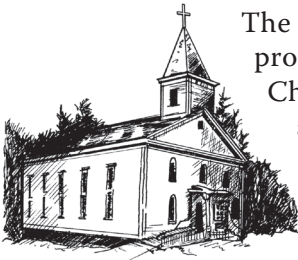
We hope you enjoy the book. If you are interested in further discussion and developments as we continue to learn about God's Word and God's world, then come join us at our website: www.beyondcreation-science.com or contact us at beyondcreationscience@gmail.com.

PART ONE

CHAPTER 1

WHAT DID JESUS SAY?

“Some Standing Here Will Not Taste Death Until...”



The problem is not in what the Bible teaches. The problem is the assumptions and expectations modern Christians bring to the Bible. Everyone has opinions about what biblical prophecy and biblical creation *should* be about, and those opinions have a lot to do with what Christians “see” in prophecy and creation.

We recognize the critical role these assumptions play in our understanding of various portions of the Bible. But prophecy, understood on its own terms, is often surprisingly direct and simple. Here is an example. Imagine yourself standing among the disciples nearly 2,000 years ago. Jesus said:

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.
(Matt. 16:27-28 NIV)

If you were there, how would you have taken Jesus’ remarkable claim? You heard Jesus say that he would come in his kingdom with angels and rewards. When? Before everyone present *at the time* died? Isn’t that what Jesus said? Think of how exciting that would be! If you were one of those standing there, you would understand that perhaps 20, 30, 40, at most maybe 50 years would pass before the coming of the Son of Man; enough time would pass for some to die (since Jesus does not say

all standing here shall not taste death till...), but not so much time that everyone present would die. That is the natural reading of the passage.

Peter Was Martyred, but John Lived On!

Do we have another example in the gospels where Jesus made a similar claim? The apostle John recorded a conversation between Jesus and Peter which took place after the resurrection. John's account of this conversation contains both a prediction by Jesus and another statement about his coming. Jesus told Peter,

“Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.” Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me!” Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, “Lord, and what about this man?” Jesus said to him, “*If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!*” (John 21:18-22 NASB)

Is this coming of Jesus the same coming of the “Son of Man” in Matthew 16:28? Again, Jesus said that someone present at that time would live until his coming! Notice Jesus predicted Peter's death as a martyr. He also suggested that John (the disciple whom Jesus loved) would live to see the coming of Christ.

John's account of Jesus' prediction after the resurrection in John 21 agrees with Matthew's account of what Jesus promised before the crucifixion in Matthew 16. Both Peter and John were present when Jesus said “Assuredly, I say to you, there are *some standing here* who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom” (Matt. 16:28 NKJV) Here in John 21 we find that Jesus said Peter would die as a result of persecution, but John would live until the coming of Christ. *John would be one of those standing there who would not taste death before the coming of Christ!*

Did Jesus' prediction about Peter's death come true? Yes, it did. Did John live longer than Peter as Jesus implied? Yes, he did. So where does that put the coming of Christ?

The Bible gives us a general idea on the timing of the coming of Christ. Not the exact day or the exact hour, but there is a window of time between the martyrdom of Peter and the death of John in which we should expect the coming of Christ to have taken place. Unless the apostle John is 2000 years old and still living somewhere, the Bible teaches the coming of Christ is in our past, not in our future.

That initial thought creates problems for modern debates over prophecy. Most prophetic views assume the Bible teaches the coming of Christ lies in *our* future. What if that expectation is false? Would not a mistake like that cause much of the confusion, irresolvable debates, and failed predictions we witness among Christians today? In light of the clear predictions Jesus made, we think it makes sense to cautiously investigate the notion that the coming of Christ has already occurred. After all, the prediction Jesus gave regarding Peter's martyrdom and John's long life came true exactly as he said. Could it be that his coming also took place exactly as he said – in the lifetime of *some* of those who listened to his teaching in person?

“This Generation Will Not Pass Away Until All ...”

The coming of Christ has already happened? We realize this might strike you as an odd way to look at prophecy. Surely, there must be some mistake. Did Jesus really mean to say that his coming would take place in the lifetime of some of his disciples? If he did intend to mean that, then it should be clear in the Olivet Discourse, the main prophetic text in the gospels.

Before we look at Jesus' sermon on the Mount of Olives, we need to establish the context. What we know as the Olivet Discourse is the last two-thirds of a long speech by Jesus. Jesus delivered the Olivet Discourse just two days before he went to his death on the cross. The first part of the speech began in Matthew 23 with Jesus teaching the crowds in the temple area:

The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore, whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love

the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, "Rabbi, Rabbi." But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. (Matt. 23:2-12 NKJV)

Jesus then cursed the leaders of Jerusalem with the seven woes:

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men;... (v. 13)

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses... (v. 14)

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!...you make [your disciple] twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. (v. 15)

Woe to you, blind guides, who [swear falsely]. (v. 16)

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you ... have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith... (v. 23)

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For... inside [you] are full of extortion and self-indulgence... (v. 25)

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs... [Y]ou outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. (vv. 27-28)

Jesus then "summed up" these woes and delivered a powerful warning:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Therefore you are witnesses against

yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that *on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth*, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. *Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.* (vv. 29-36)

Notice that Jesus condemned specific sins of a specific group of religious leaders: the scribes and Pharisees *of his day*. He closed his admonition with a promise to send more prophets, wise men, and scribes, which they would scourge, persecute, kill, and crucify, just as their fathers had done. Jesus then promised to *punish them*, after which he lamented Jerusalem's fate:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' (vv. 37-39)

Remember, this speech took place two days before the crucifixion. No wonder the religious leaders were so intent on killing Jesus! This was too much for the religious leaders to allow. Matthew 26:1-5 tells us these religious leaders immediately started their plot to crucify him.

After pronouncing judgment on Jerusalem and its leaders, Jesus and his disciples left the temple courts to go sit in the shade of the nearby olive trees. On the way, Jesus' disciples remarked about the beauty and magnificence of the temple and its courts. Jesus responded with these words,

Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down." (Matt. 24:2)

When they were finally alone, the disciples approached Jesus and asked,

Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age? (v. 3)

Jesus answered them,

Take heed that no one deceives you. (v. 4)

Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. (v. 9)

Therefore when you see the "abomination of desolation," spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. (v. 15-16)

For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. (v. 21)

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call... (v. 30-31)

Assuredly, I say to you, *this generation will by no means pass away until all these things take place.* Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away. (v. 34-35)

Notice the parenthetical comment in v. 15. When Matthew wrote this passage he understood that it was a warning to his readers. Notice also that Jesus (1) references the great tribulation in vv. 9 and 21, (2) references the Son of Man coming "on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" in v. 30, and (3) tells them when *all* these things would happen in v. 34: "This generation will by no means pass away until all these things take place." That is, these things would all take place during the generation Jesus referenced in Matthew 23:36.

That must have sent the disciples reeling. Put yourselves in their sandals again. The temple was the pride of Israel. It was the place where sacrifices and all the regulations of the Mosaic code were carried out day after day. It was the place at the center of life for devout Jews, the sign of God's presence rested in the Holy of Holies. Yet here was Jesus

claiming that everything he had just predicted would take place before *that* generation passed away!

Jesus reiterated the timing of his coming as found in Matthew 16:28 in Matthew 24:34. “This generation will not pass away until all these things take place” is essentially the same as “some of those standing here will not die before they see the Son of Man coming with his kingdom.” Both statements demand fulfillment a few decades into the future, but within a future limited to the lifetimes of those who heard Jesus speak.

Continuing the same speech, Jesus said,

But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. (vv. 37-39)

In Matthew 25, Jesus concluded the Olivet Discourse:

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him... and He will separate them one from another... And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matt. 25:31-32, 46 NKJV)

Yet all of this echoed what was said just a few verses back

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven... and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Matt. 24:30 NKJV)

Notice the similarity between Matthew 16:27, the passage we examined at the opening of this chapter, and Matthew 25:31-32, 46:

For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. (Matt. 16:27 NKJV)

This similarity gives strong contextual evidence that all of these texts speak to the same “coming of the Son of Man.” Author Gary DeMar emphasizes the resemblance and shows the problem with how many Christians read the Olivet Discourse today:

[T]here is little evidence that the “coming of the Son of Man” in Mathew 24:27, 30, 39, and 42 is different from the “coming of the Son of Man” in 25:31. Compare 25:31 with 16:27, a certain reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70... These verses are almost identical.¹

To miss the identification of the time when an event is said to occur will mean that the discourse can be made to fit any generation. This, of course, would lead to tremendous confusion. There is no doubt that this error is the chief problem for those who maintain that the events of Matthew 24-25 and other prophetic passages are yet to be fulfilled, either in our generation or in some future generation.²

Jesus spoke of things related to the life and experience of the disciples throughout the entire Olivet Discourse.

The Great Tribulation has Already Happened

Our first claim is bold: We believe biblical prophecy can be understood by Christians. We don't believe the Bible's teachings on the matter are incomprehensible – that the details are so complex they are beyond the reach of Christians in our day.

The Olivet Discourse makes it absolutely clear that the coming of Christ is connected intimately to what happened to the city of Jerusalem and the temple. Not only does that mean the coming of Christ is related to 1st century events, it also means that what we now call “the great tribulation” took place in *localized*, historical events. Jesus mourned over Jerusalem, not the world. Jesus pronounced judgment on the leaders of Israel, not modern-day world leaders. Gary DeMar offers this explanation:

Keep in mind that the tribulation described by Jesus in Matthew 24 was local, confined to the land of Israel. The people were still living in houses with flat roofs (Matthew 24:17). The setting was agricultural (24:18). The Sabbath was still in force with its rigid travel restrictions (24:20)... The tribulation had reference to the Jews, the people of Judea (Matthew 24:16; Luke 21:20-24); it was not a world-wide tribulation.³

Here is where a proper understanding of the great tribulation holds implications for the Genesis debate. Jesus drew a comparison in the Olivet Discourse that few stop to consider. He compared Noah's flood which "swept them all away" with the great tribulation and his coming. Consider the words of Jesus once again:

But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. (Matt. 24:37 NKJV)

Jesus explicitly compared his coming to the days of Noah. If the great tribulation happened in the local events of the first century, then how should we understand the historical events of Noah's flood? Prophetic views have tremendous implications for the Genesis debate among Christians.

Two Debates in One Book

Few subjects in the Church today generate more controversy than end-times prophecy and Genesis creation. Any book that begins with a discussion of New Testament prophecy should be suspect. Even worse is a book that dives into the origins debate at the same time. This book combines these two explosive debates — on purpose.

It may seem ambitious to tackle both ends of the Bible at once. We think that is exactly what needs to be done. We want to investigate how these two enormous issues, Bible prophecy and Genesis creation, relate to one another across our Bible. We will begin with New Testament prophecy. Then we will show how differing views of prophecy naturally match a complementary understanding of Genesis creation.

X-millennialism vs. Pan-millennialism

Prophecy alone is a vast subject. There are so many different views that many Christians are confused by the topic. Eyes glaze over whenever someone starts sprinkling conversation with such big words as *eschatology** or *premillennialism*, *postmillennialism*, and *amillennialism*.† It gets worse when we find out that each of these common views possess their own internal debates and nuances over which people make

* Eschatology is the study of "last things" or "end times."

† Millennialism derives its meaning from the "one thousand years" mentioned in Rev. 20:2, 4-5. *Pre-* and *post-*millennialism refer to the view that the second coming of Christ occurs before or after the so-called millennium, respectively.

great fuss. Is there any hope at all that we can really understand the full picture of what the Bible teaches in prophecy?

Many have lost hope. The seeming futility of the whole exercise has given rise to a new view that seems appropriate, given the state of the debate. Many call it “*pan-millennialism*” – it all “pans” out in the end. In other words, don’t get caught up in the details, just focus on the victory at the end. We can all agree on the victory at the end, right?

That is good enough for some Christians. It is certainly the easiest view to understand. It may even be better than some of the other big-name views mentioned above. We sympathize with the pan-millennialist who, when in the presence of someone expounding upon the finer points of some x-millennialist view of prophecy, shrugs his shoulders and wonders if we will ever know in this life.

The problem with the pan-millennialist viewpoint is that much of the Bible, especially the New Testament, talks about prophecy in great detail. If you ignore what the New Testament says about prophecy, you are going to miss a lot of what Jesus said. Did Jesus think the details of his coming were unimportant to understand?

The only way to honor Jesus is to pay close attention to *everything* he taught. His disciples certainly did. After Jesus ascended into heaven, the apostles had a lot to say about prophecy. They thought it was very important to get it right. Why was it so important for them to get it right and to teach others to get it right? What if *their* lives depended on it, literally?

There is no doubt that confusion about biblical prophecy reigns among Christians today. That does not mean our situation is hopeless; it may simply mean the study of God’s Word, like anything valuable in life, will take considerable work. Why would the Bible have so much prophecy in it if Christians were not meant to understand it?

Another problem with the pan-millennial approach is that our understanding of prophecy inevitably impacts what Christians believe about a great number of things in our world. Christians generally act in terms of their beliefs. Should Christians believe the latest prophecy book about a coming “rapture”? Should American Christians commit

A-millennialism refers to the view that the millennium is figurative and need not be restricted to a literal 1000-year period.

themselves to unquestioning political support for the nation of Israel? Should we plan for the distant future if the end of the world is so near? What goals should the Church make to impact modern culture for Christ? There is no possible neutrality about these questions. All of them relate one way or another to how Christians understand prophecy. Prophetic views drive Christian culture. That is precisely why they are so controversial.

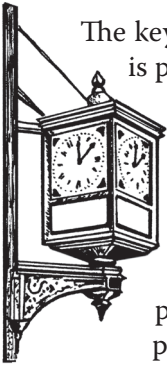
As we have already hinted, New Testament prophecy relates to other things in the Bible as well. In the following pages, we will explore in depth the many biblical links between prophecy and Genesis creation. We will present a case that the Genesis debate among Christians has been and will continue to be impacted profoundly by prophetic views. What about creation and Noah's flood? Is evolution compatible with the Bible? Is it biblically possible that our universe could be millions or even billions of years old? We'll get to all that, but first we need to lay some more groundwork for a proper understanding of prophetic teaching in the Bible.

Is it worth considering the possibility that *every* detail Jesus gave within the Olivet Discourse was fulfilled in the 1st century events leading up to AD 70? In AD 30, Jesus promised that every stone of the temple would be thrown down before that generation passed away. It is a powerful vindication of his prophetic word that we know Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in AD 70, 40 years later. What Jesus said would happen in the lifetime of some of his disciples came to pass exactly as he predicted it would. The Olivet Discourse is fulfilled prophecy.

CHAPTER 2

TIME IS RUNNING OUT

The Proper Frame of Reference



The key to the proper understanding of New Testament prophecy is perspective. Just as a basic rule in physics is to recognize the relevant frame of reference, so it is in the study of Bible prophecy. Much confusion about prophecy disappears when the proper reference frame is honored: the first generation of Christians.

It is very easy to forget that our New Testament speaks of real people who lived at a particular time and place on planet Earth. It is not merely a collection of doctrine and practical truths. It certainly contains those things, but it is first of all an amazing story of events, such as the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, which happened in real time at a specific location on planet Earth. These first Christians are the reference frame for prophecy; many of them actually listened to Jesus teach in person. These real, live, historical human beings are the ones who heard Jesus promise them:

Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. (Matt. 16:28 NKJV)

Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. (Matt. 24:34 NKJV)

There are many who insist that Jesus never meant to imply his coming would take place in the first century. They deny that the original audience is the proper frame of reference for prophecy. Future expectations of fulfillment force many Christians to blunt or redirect the plain

words of Jesus. Perhaps this is done out of habit rather than conscious effort. Some do it out of sincere concern to protect Jesus and the apostles from perceived error. What if the error is us not listening to what Jesus said?

His predictions are both clear and direct. No attempt to explain away or redirect these explicit time statements will ever be intellectually satisfying. Every other example in Matthew of the phrase “this generation” using the Greek word *genea* refers to contemporaries — all those who live at one time. Every other example of “this generation” *in the rest of the New Testament* refers to contemporaries.

There are also many other places in the New Testament which show clearly how “generation” is a reference to a *specific* generation. Paul says:

In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. (Eph.3:4-5 NIV)

Paul understood the events in his generation would impact all generations to come. We see that in his doxology at the conclusion of Ephesians 3:

To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph. 3:21 NKJV)

The only hope for truly understanding biblical prophecy is to abandon the blinding presupposition that Jesus’ promise about his coming simply must refer to something which will happen in *our* future. As long as that presupposition prevails, the biblical evidence will remain a chaotic, incomprehensible confusion. If you were there and heard Jesus make these claims in front of you, would you not trust Jesus at his word?

The Disciples Followed the Master

His disciples did exactly that. If we compare Jesus’ claims to what the apostles taught over the next few decades, as recorded in the New Testament, we will see how the apostles believed every word of Jesus’ promise. They believed that *all* that Jesus promised — the great tribulation, the destruction of the temple, and his coming — would take place

in *their* lifetime. What's more, they speak of some of the signs Jesus gave in the Olivet Discourse as coming to pass in their experience as we read later and later, chronologically, through the New Testament.

There is development in the early Church expectation as time goes by. The later it gets in New Testament times, the more urgency we see in the apostles' proclamation of the coming of Christ. In other words, the time statements *narrow* as the end of that generation gets closer and closer. A chronological look at the New Testament confirms the apostles taught nothing different than what Jesus promised during his ministry. The disciples proclaimed their Master's teaching. The time element in New Testament prophecy shouts "first century fulfillment!" from beginning to end.

Initial Expectation

Before Jesus began his public ministry, John the Baptist preached in the wilderness on the other side of the Jordan River. To the Pharisees and Sadducees, the same religious leaders Jesus later warned, John said, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matt. 3:7, Luke 3:7 NKJV) Even before Jesus announced "this generation," John spoke of a coming judgment.

Seven weeks after the resurrection of Jesus, Peter adopted the same general expectation: "*this generation*." Luke records Peter's sermon at Pentecost in Acts 2. Notice Peter's conclusion:

And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from *this* perverse *generation*."
(Acts 2:40 NKJV)

Peter warned them about the judgment to come on Jerusalem as a result of their crucifixion of Jesus (Acts 2:22-23). Since many who heard Peter's sermon were in Jerusalem for the Passover feast seven weeks earlier, it is likely some of them joined with the crowds who answered Pilate by saying, "Let his blood be upon us and our children" (Matt. 27:25 NIV). Peter delivered a shocking message to his audience. He stood before God-fearing Jews and claimed they had put their long-awaited Messiah to death!

Peter's sermon makes sense when we place it in the context of the Old Testament which his listeners knew well. Moses prophesied in the Law that God would send another prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15-19).

Moses warned anyone who would not listen to this prophet that God himself would “call him to account.”

Peter’s generation not only refused to listen to that prophet – they crucified him!¹ Peter’s message struck terror into those who became convicted of their guilt as they listened. When they came to realize what they had done to their Messiah, they were cut to the heart, and immediately asked Peter and the apostles what they should do (Acts 2:37).

As devout Jews, they knew that God is just and would avenge Jesus’ innocent blood.² But God graciously provided an escape for those who repented from their terrible act done in ignorance. Peter preached from the prophet Joel, “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Acts 2:21 NIV). While dying on the cross, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34 NIV). For everyone who repented and received Christ, God answered Jesus’ prayer (Acts 2:38-41).

Note that Peter’s time perspective for the coming of God’s judgment had not changed. Peter said the same thing Jesus did less than eight weeks earlier during the Olivet Discourse: “Be saved from *this* perverse generation” (Acts 2:40 NKJV).

Some time passed after Pentecost before the Church began to spread out across the Roman Empire. 1 Thessalonians, arguably the first of Paul’s epistles, is representative of early New Testament teaching about the coming of the Lord. Paul taught the Thessalonian Christians (some of whom were Jews³) that the promise of Christ’s coming was as sure as their shared faith in his death and resurrection. Paul based his teaching about the coming of Christ explicitly upon what Jesus promised *during his ministry*:

We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. *According to the Lord’s own word*, we tell you that *we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord*, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. (1 Thess. 4:14-15 NIV)

Does it not look like Paul believed that some would remain alive until the coming of the Lord? His time expectation is not focused any narrower than the limit of his own generation. Henry Morris, whom many consider the founder of modern young-earth creationism, agrees that Paul expected the Lord’s coming in his day:

When Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica, it was relatively early in his ministry, and he was evidently even then looking for the Lord's return. "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air," he wrote (1 Thess. 4:17).⁴

Why would Paul teach that some of his audience would live to see the coming of the Lord? Again, the answer is rooted in Jesus' own promises in passages such as Matthew 16:27-28, John 21:22-23, and Matthew 24:34. Paul believed that some of his own audience would live to see the coming of the Lord because of the Lord's own teaching. If Christians still await the coming of the Lord in our future, two thousand years later and counting, then we face some difficult questions about Paul's teaching. Was Paul mistaken? Did he teach the Thessalonians that some of them would remain alive "till the coming of the Lord" in error?

Near-*ing* Expectation

As we proceed chronologically later into the writing of the New Testament this time perspective begins to shorten.

James, the brother of Jesus, makes a direct reference to the impending judgment of Jerusalem and Judea and the coming of Christ. But he does not write in terms of a "generation." His expectation is noticeably shorter. James writes:

You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you. Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is *near*. Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. *The Judge is standing at the door!* (James 5:5-9 NIV)

Although there is some debate about when James wrote his letter, most agree that at least twenty years had gone by since Jesus taught the crowds in Judea. James encourages patience and promises, at the time of his letter, that the Lord's coming is near. His imagery of the judge standing at the door is a powerful testament to the fact that the time was getting *closer*. The coming of the Lord was nearer from James' per-

spective than from the delivery of the Olivet Discourse or Peter's sermon at Pentecost.

James also confirms that at least some of what Jesus predicted in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:9) had *already* taken place: people were being persecuted and killed. Jesus' promise of the coming persecution to death was already a fact in the experience of James. He had firsthand experience with the stoning of Stephen and the great persecution which broke out in Jerusalem.⁵ Like Jesus, James warned his hearers of the judgment to come on all those who spilled the innocent blood of God's beloved people.

Near-er Expectation

The later books of the New Testament are difficult to place in exact chronological order. Whatever their precise dates may be, they highlight the growing urgency and immediacy with which the apostles spoke concerning the coming of Christ. Their time perspective narrowed even more as the years of that generation dwindled down.

One example is how the writer of Hebrews explicitly *denies* there will be a great delay before the coming of Christ:

Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 'For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.' (Heb. 10:35-37 NKJV)

The writer of Hebrews quotes from the prophet Habakkuk. Why would he find Habakkuk relevant to his teaching? The answer is found in Habakkuk's historical situation as it compared to the early Church. In his own day, Habakkuk prophesied that Babylon would *soon* destroy Jerusalem and overrun Judah:

For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry. (Hab. 2:3 NKJV)

Habakkuk claimed that God's judgment would not tarry. And it did not. God judged Judah in 586 BC by ordaining the destruction of Judah and Solomon's temple. The writer of Hebrews repeats Habakkuk's warning because the time had come for God's judgment on Jerusalem

and Judea by means of the Roman armies. His Hebrew audience, who knew their history well, could not possibly miss the power of this quotation. As surely as Habakkuk's prophecy was near in the prophet's day, so the coming of Christ was near in their day. Jerusalem and the Temple would soon be destroyed at the coming of Christ just as Jesus promised: "He who is coming will come and will not tarry."

It is a symptom of the confusion that dominates current discussion of prophecy that those who continue to place the coming of Christ in our future speak of Christ as "tarrying" to our day, thousands of years later. However the author of Hebrews plainly says that he who is coming "will *not* tarry." Hebrews teaches explicitly *against* an indefinite time period of waiting for the coming of Christ.

Peter's second epistle is another late New Testament book. We know it must be very late because 2 Peter 3:15-16 indicates Paul's letters were in wide circulation by the time Peter wrote. The chronology helps us because the conflict between the early Christians and Jewish unbelievers forms the backdrop for the entire letter. Note how 2 Peter 3 places the promise of Jesus' coming at the very center of a great debate between the Christians and those who continued to reject Christ. Peter writes:

First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." (2 Peter 3:3-4 NIV)

Keep in mind that Peter wrote this passage some thirty years after the ministry of Christ. Yet, the scoffers *remembered* exactly what Jesus promised would happen before *that* generation passed away. He said *that* generation would see him coming with power and great glory. He promised *that* generation would not pass away until the temple and Jerusalem had been completely destroyed. Even *unbelievers* in Peter's day understood precisely what Jesus taught the people.

Jude, another late epistle in the New Testament, said these scoffers Peter warned about had *now arrived*!

But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, "In the *last times* there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." These are the men who divide *you*, who follow

mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit. (Jude 17-19 NIV)

In essence, these scoffers claimed that Jesus' promises had failed. These Jewish skeptics⁶ used the fact that the temple was still standing, as well as the fact that life went on as normal in Jerusalem, as an argument *against* Peter's faith in this self-professed Messiah. Author Don K. Preston gives this explanation:

The point is that the scoffers were not scientific uniformitarians looking at the creation and extrapolating from that to a denial of Christ's coming. They were looking at the (imagined) stability of their *world*. It was a world determined by "the fathers," and that was *the Old Covenant world*.⁷

These scoffers in Peter's day believed the non-occurrence of Jesus' prophesied coming refuted everything Jesus taught. Doesn't the fact that Peter had to contend with scoffers confirm that Peter believed what Jesus predicted would come to pass in their experience?⁸ After all, it was Peter who wrote, "The end of all things is near" (1 Peter 4:7 NIV) in his first letter.

As we now know from history, the scoffers' assessment was a wee bit premature. But we should understand how important their argument would be at the time of Peter's writing. The Old Testament teaches God's people to test *anyone* who claimed to be a prophet. How were they to test a self-professed prophet who appeared to them (as Jesus did)? The Law teaches:

You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him. (Deut. 18:21-22 NIV).

If what Jesus predicted in his Olivet Discourse did not come true by the end of that generation, then *no one* should listen to him or his followers. The Law gave a standard by which the people could judge those who claimed to be a prophet of God. 2 Peter 3 shows how the Christian faith stands or falls on Jesus' promises given during his earthly ministry. The skeptics knew it. Peter knew it. All debate ended in AD 70.

Many Christians continue to place Peter's reference of the coming of Christ into our future. By so doing, they end up agreeing, unintentionally, with the scoffers of Peter's day – that Jesus' promise to come to that generation failed. Unfortunately, the implication of placing the coming of Christ into our future is that Jesus was a false prophet. How many consider the fact that if Jesus was a false prophet, *then his crucifixion at the hands of the Jewish leaders was justified?* The religious leaders had authority under the Law of Moses to punish false prophets. If Jesus did not come to that generation, then time showed he was a false prophet and deserved his death sentence.

We will have much more to say about how careless Christian teaching about what the Bible purportedly says can destroy the credibility of the Bible and our Christian faith. The very same issue relates to the Genesis debate as well.

Near-est Expectation

The book of Revelation was one of the last New Testament books to be written. Revelation, written c. AD 64-66 under the reign of Nero, gives a new level of urgency and expectation. If we consider a biblical generation to be approximately 40 years (cf. Num. 14:32-33), then most of the time for the fulfillment of Jesus' predictions had expired by the time John wrote the book. This was around the time of Peter's death. (Remember, Jesus promised that Peter would die a martyr's death and John would live to see the coming of Christ in John 21:20-23). Revelation also appears to have been written while the temple in Jerusalem was still standing (Rev. 11:1-2).⁹

John opens the book by writing:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants — things which must *shortly* take place.
(Rev. 1:1 NKJV)

John communicates a near expectation from the very first verse! But John does not stop there. He emphasizes the time element by repeating his claim with slightly different wording to emphasize his point:

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near. (Rev. 1:3 NKJV)

John also claims to be a companion in *that* day of persecution. The tribulation was already present when John wrote the book of Revelation:

I, John, both your brother and companion in *the tribulation* and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Rev. 1:9 NKJV)

Isn't John referencing the great tribulation Jesus promised would come upon his disciples?

John's clear time statements are not limited to the introduction of Revelation; they are sprinkled throughout the book. Here is one example of the immediacy of his expectation:

Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, *I am coming quickly!* (Rev. 3:10-11 NKJV)

Many ignore the time statement because of the "global" sounding language in this passage as well as the general "global" flavor of the book that a surface reading might suggest. One might reason that this time statement could not be fulfilled already because the subject is the "whole world" and "the earth." In the chapters to come we will discuss the seemingly global language in this passage and how our interpretation of it relates directly to the Genesis debate. For now, it is important to consider that this passage *does* possess a clear time statement, and that John expected the coming of Christ to take place in his very near future.

John concludes his book with an avalanche of time statements that highlight just how close he believed those events to be. Consider how much John emphasizes his near expectation for the events in the conclusion to Revelation:

Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. "Behold, *I am coming quickly!*" (22:6-7 NKJV)

And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for *the time is at hand.*" (22:10 NKJV)

And behold, *I am coming quickly*, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. (22:12 NKJV)

He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely *I am coming quickly*.’ (22:20 NKJV)

If repetition is used to mark emphasis in the Bible, then no one should miss John’s point. Over and over he says the time is *near*. This is exactly what we would expect John to emphasize if he understood that the time Jesus allotted for fulfillment, i.e., the passing of one generation, was almost up. It also may very well be that by this time John knew that Peter had been martyred as Jesus promised back in John 21:18-19. Everything Jesus promised had come to pass – there was nothing left for which to wait.

The time statements throughout the book imply that the subject material of Revelation parallels Jesus’ Olivet Discourse. John’s highly symbolic apocalyptic style can easily lose modern readers, but the content of Revelation mirrors the Olivet Discourse. Consider Matthew 23:30-36 and Revelation 18:20, 24 as parallel passages:

Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, *that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth*, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. (Matt. 23:34-36 NKJV).

Rejoice over her, O heaven, and *you* holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!...*And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth*. (Rev. 18:20, 24 NKJV).

The similarity of these passages suggests that first century Jerusalem is at the center of the story Revelation tells.

Revelation: John’s Olivet Discourse

Since Revelation parallels the themes and teaching of the Olivet Discourse, we suggest that Revelation is John’s extended version of the

Olivet Discourse. John's gospel is the only gospel which contains no reference to the Olivet Discourse. That is no coincidence, because John dedicates the entire book of Revelation to a full unveiling of the meaning and fulfillment of all Jesus promised in the Olivet Discourse as well as the vision of the coming Messiah in power and glory.

There is a great deal of symbolism and imagery in Revelation. We will talk more about the style of John's poetic and symbolic writing in the chapters to come, but the best way to read the book is to place yourself into the shoes of the early Church and make their expectations of the coming of Christ your own. They patiently awaited their vindication by the hand of God. John wrote to *them* and promised deliverance to come *soon*.

The Jewish leaders, many of whom attempted to destroy the early Church across the entire Roman Empire, were utterly destroyed in AD 70. Jews from around the Empire who rejected Jesus and the testimony of the apostles gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover in the spring of AD 70. This is when the Roman siege of Jerusalem began. As a result, they all became trapped inside a doomed city. Those who ignored the days of vengeance Jesus promised would come on that generation were either killed or taken out of Judea as slaves. National Israel was destroyed. The old covenant's institutional forms of sacrificial worship, made obsolete by the finished work of Christ (Hebrews 8:13), also perished in the flames of the Roman destruction in AD 70. The bottom line is that a first-century fulfillment of Revelation not only fits the time element we've seen so predominant in Jesus' teaching, it also makes all the references to common warfare at the time – siege warfare, battle horses, swords, etc – intelligible. Revelation speaks about things past, things present, and things future *in John's world*.

Conclusion

All of the New Testament writers taught that Christ would come to their generation. They emphasized the near expectation of the coming of Christ more and more as time passed in the historical context of the New Testament. Their time statements narrowed as they came closer and closer to the ultimate fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in the Olivet Discourse. What really happened in AD 70? Can Christians honestly say that prophetic events happened how and when Jesus and the apostles said? There is no argument for Christianity more powerful than the direct fulfillment of prophecy. Could it be that the coming of Christ with

power and great glory was fulfilled in first century events centered in Jerusalem and Judea?

CHAPTER 3

WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN?

Coming on the Clouds

The Jewish Sanhedrin condemned Jesus to death not just for claiming to be God, but for another reason as well. They were infuriated when Jesus claimed that *they* would see him bring judgment upon Jerusalem:

Jesus said to him, “It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” (Matt. 26:64 NKJV)

Imagine, just before sentencing, the most extreme act of defiance. Jesus implied that he would return from the dead and kill the high priest and the entire court with God’s full fury and glory.



“Coming on the clouds” meant judgment and destruction upon the enemies of God in the Old Testament. God rides on the clouds; every Jew knew this judgment metaphor from their Scriptures:

The burden against Egypt. Behold, the LORD rides on a swift cloud, and will come into Egypt; The idols of Egypt will totter at His presence, and the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst. (Is. 19:1 NKJV)

The LORD is slow to anger and great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished. His way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and clouds are the dust of his feet. ... His wrath is poured out like fire; ... but with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of Nineveh.... (Nah. 1:3, 6, 8 NIV)

He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants. (Psalm 104:3-4 NIV)

The association between the glory cloud and God's acts of judgment is not limited to the Psalms and prophets. Note the connection between them in the historical account of the exodus:

During the last watch of the night the LORD looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. He made the wheels of their chariots come off so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, "Let's get away from the Israelites! The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt." (Ex. 14:24-25 NIV)

There are two aspects of the glory-cloud judgment in Exodus 14. God simultaneously destroyed the Egyptian army and saved his people when he acted from the glory cloud.

This historical example highlights a theme of "coming on the clouds" that runs throughout the rest of the Bible. The cloud-coming imagery, which is prominent in New Testament prophecy, is based on Old Testament examples such as Exodus 14. They understood what Jesus meant when he promised to come "on the clouds of heaven."

The Right Question

In Chapters 1 and 2 we claimed that the coming Jesus and the apostles promised has already happened. We made our initial case based on what Scripture says. We assume that Jesus and the apostles knew what they were talking about when they promised these events would occur during their generation, and we firmly believe that they were true prophets who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to give these prophecies.

So then, it either happened or it didn't. It is fair for you the reader to ask a relevant and appropriate question, at this point: "When did this happen?" There are two aspects to this question that need to be answered. First, we must show you reasonable evidence that the overall event that Jesus promised in the Olivet Discourse came to pass. Secondly, we must show you reasonable evidence that each of the details Jesus described as signs came to pass within that generation.

Regarding the temple, Jesus said, "not one stone here will be left on another" (Matt. 24:2 NKJV). If you go to Jerusalem today, the temple

is gone. Unlike other ancient structures of the first century such as the Coliseum, the Parthenon, Areopagus, amphitheaters, and Roman aqueducts, there is nothing left of Herod's temple. The top of the mountain was scraped so clean that only a retaining wall below remains. There is even debate about where, precisely, Herod's temple was located on the temple mount because there is no observable evidence of its foundation or structure. The Romans completely demolished the temple under the direction of General Titus in AD 70, about 40 years after Jesus spoke those words.*

What We Should Expect

The Bible has nothing to say about the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple as *past* history. The Bible speaks about it only as prophecy. That should suggest the New Testament books were already written before this event took place.¹ It seems inconceivable for the New Testament writers to remain completely silent about the Jewish War and destruction of Jerusalem with its temple if these events lay in their past as they wrote the New Testament.² In order to investigate this prophecy, we must go to history, Church history and secular history written after AD 70.

What should we expect from Church history if our viewpoint is correct? Jesus warned his disciples to flee (Matt. 24:15-16). If the disciples recognized these events in their day as fulfillment of the Olivet Discourse, then Church history should record the early Christians fleeing Jerusalem. Furthermore, if the early Christians acted in obedience to Jesus' warnings, there would have been *no Christian eyewitness* to the event because no Christians were present. In this scenario, Christians would need to rely wholly upon secular history for eyewitness accounts of these events.

Eusebius, the early Church historian, recounts this precise situation. He wrote:

But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella. And when those that believed in Christ had come there from Jerusalem, then, as if the

* Some sources (primarily Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox) date the Olivet Discourse and the crucifixion to AD 33 and the destruction of Jerusalem to AD 73, also about 40 years apart. In this book, we have used the dates generally preferred by the conservative Evangelical church, AD 30 and AD 70.

royal city of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were entirely destitute of holy men, the judgment of God at length overtook those who had committed such outrages against Christ and his apostles, and *totally destroyed that generation of impious men* [emphasis ours].³

Eusebius claimed that the early Christians were warned by *approved men* (apostles?) and that they listened and left Jerusalem and Judea. Eusebius then endorsed the history of Josephus, a Jewish general and prisoner of war who witnessed the entire siege:

But the number of calamities which everywhere fell upon the nation at that time; the extreme misfortunes to which the inhabitants of Judea were especially subjected, the thousands of men, as well as women and children, that perished by the sword, by famine, and by other forms of death innumerable, — all these things, as well as the many great sieges which were carried on against the cities of Judea, and the excessive sufferings endured by those that fled to Jerusalem itself, as to a city of perfect safety, and finally the general course of the whole war, as well as its particular occurrences in detail, and how at last the abomination of desolation, proclaimed by the prophets [Daniel 9:27], stood in the very temple of God, so celebrated of old, the temple which was now awaiting its total and final destruction by fire — all these things any one that wishes may find accurately described in the history written by Josephus.⁴

Eusebius then quoted Josephus at length to demonstrate that what Jesus spoke of in the Olivet Discourse was fulfilled. Josephus' *Wars of the Jews* is a long book and provides evidence for the fulfillment of nearly every single prophecy in the Olivet Discourse. Acts references some of the things Jesus promised would come upon that generation such as earthquakes, famines, persecution, and the spread of the gospel.

The difficulty is that most Christians do not know about the Jewish-Roman War. Even those who know vaguely about this war cannot imagine that anything as horrible as what Jesus predicted could have ever happened in the past. What if Josephus confirms that it did?

When Rome invaded and destroyed Judea and Jerusalem some one to two million people died[†] and one hundred thousand were taken away into slavery. Yet apparently not one Christian was lost. We have no indication that even one Christian witnessed the destruction of what was arguably the greatest city on earth; Jerusalem was possibly second only to Rome in that day. Jesus had warned his followers and they listened. History tells us exactly what we should expect if the Olivet Discourse and the coming of Christ were fulfilled in the first century. The first Christians knew that Jesus' warnings were given to them.

Setting the Scene

What we will show for the skeptical or curious reader in the pages to follow is that Josephus uses similar and often virtually identical language to describe the horrors Jesus pronounced upon the city a generation earlier. Here is one example:

It appears to me that the misfortunes of all men, from the beginning of the world, are not so considerable as those of the Jews... This makes it impossible for me to contain my lamentations. (Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, Whiston's Translation, Preface, Paragraph 4)

Jesus Christ, the real victor, prophesied this history 40 years earlier. Jesus had warned:

For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now — and never to be equaled again. (Matt. 24:21 NIV; see also Mark 13:19; Luke 21:23)

Do you see the similarity between the two quotes above? Josephus uses comparably strong language to describe the cataclysm Jesus pronounced upon the city a generation earlier.

Jesus was crucified in about AD 30. At that time, the major political factions in Israel were the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Zealots, and the Idumeans. The Idumeans were a desert people who were Jews by religion but not by ethnicity. Allied with Rome, the Idumeans and

[†] Josephus is ambiguous about the final body count. Either one million died by the famine and at the hand of the violent people in the city and another million died when the city fell to the Romans, or the combined death toll numbered a million people.

Sadducees wielded political power jointly. The Pharisees held religious influence among the people, but were on the outs and wanted political control. The Zealots wanted to overthrow the Roman government and declare national independence.

King Herod Agrippa, an Idumean, served as Rome's puppet. The Sadducees controlled the temple priesthood. The Pharisees controlled the local synagogues. *Pax Romana*, the Peace of Rome which dominated the entire Roman Empire for the first 50 years of the first century, made war unthinkable for everyone except the Zealots. By AD 64, war was inevitable; the Idumeans changed their alliance from Rome to the Zealots and the Pharisees planned to overthrow the Sadducees.

Josephus wrote seven books describing this history and the calamity of this war. They are bloody. They are gruesome. They are shocking. The selections that follow compare the words of Josephus the historian with the words of Jesus the Messiah as well as a few other well-known biblical prophecies. We will follow the order in Josephus' *Wars of the Jews*, comparing Josephus' words to Jesus' predictions. Just point to Jesus' words and ask, "When did this happen?" You decide if history confirms the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecies.



There Shall Be False Prophets

Biblical testimony:

Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, "I am the Christ," and will deceive many.
(Matt 24:4-5 NKJV; see also Mark 13:5-6; Luke 21:8)

Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.
(Matt. 24:11 NKJV)

They will say to you, "Look here!" or "Look there!" Do not go after them or follow them. (Luke 17:23 NKJV)

Then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or "There!" do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, "Look, He is in the desert!"

do not go out; or "Look, He is in the inner rooms!" do not believe it. (Matt. 24:23-26 NKJV; see also Mark 13:21-23)

Biblical-Historical testimony:

Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is the divine power known as the Great Power." They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic. (Acts 8:9-11 NIV)

Historical testimony:

There was also another body of wicked men gotten together, not so impure in their actions, but more wicked in their intentions, which laid waste the happy state of the city no less than did these murderers. These were such men as deceived and deluded the people under pretense of Divine inspiration, but were for procuring innovations and changes of the government; and these prevailed with the multitude to act like madmen, and went before them into the wilderness, as pretending that God would there show them the signals of liberty. But Felix thought this procedure was to be the beginning of a revolt; so he sent some horsemen and footmen both armed, who destroyed a great number of them.

But there was an Egyptian false prophet that did the Jews more mischief than the former; for he was a cheat, and pretended to be a prophet also, and got together thirty thousand men that were deluded by him; these he led round about from the wilderness to the mount which was called the Mount of Olives, and was ready to break into Jerusalem by force from that place; and if he could but once conquer the Roman garrison and the people, he intended to domineer over them by the assistance of those guards of his that were to break into the city with him. But Felix prevented his attempt, and met him with his Roman soldiers, while all the people assisted him in his attack upon them, insomuch that when it came to a battle, the Egyptian ran away, with a few others, while the greatest part of those

that were with him were either destroyed or taken alive; but the rest of the multitude were dispersed every one to their own homes, and there concealed themselves. (Josephus, *Wars*, Book 2, Chapter 13, Paragraphs 4-5)

Increase of Lawlessness and Decadence

Biblical testimony:

And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. (Matt. 24:12 NKJV)

Historical testimony:

Now when these were quieted, it happened, as it does in a diseased body, that another part was subject to an inflammation; for a company of deceivers and robbers got together, and persuaded the Jews to revolt, and exhorted them to assert their liberty, inflicting death on those that continued in obedience to the Roman government, and saying, that such as willingly chose slavery ought to be forced from such their desired inclinations; for they parted themselves into different bodies, and lay in wait up and down the country, and plundered the houses of the great men, and slew the men themselves, and set the villages on fire; and this till all Judea was filled with the effects of their madness. And thus the flame was every day more and more blown up, till it came to a direct war. (Josephus, *Wars*, Book 2, Chapter 13, Paragraphs 6)

There Shall Be Wars and Rumors of Wars

Biblical testimony:

You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. (Matt. 24:6-7 NKJV; see also Mark 13:7-8; Luke 21:9-10)

Historical testimony:

Now the people of Cesarea had slain the Jews that were among them on the very same day and hour [when the soldiers were slain], which one would think must have come to pass by the direction of Providence; insomuch that in one hour's time above twenty thousand Jews were killed, and all Cesarea was emptied of its Jewish inhabitants; for Florus caught such as ran away, and sent them in bonds to the galleys. Upon which stroke that the Jews received at Cesarea, the whole nation was greatly enraged; so they divided themselves into several parties, and laid waste the villages of the Syrians, and their neighboring cities, Philadelphia, and Sebonitis, and Gerasa, and Pella, and Scythopolis, and after them Gadara, and Hippos; and falling upon Gaulonitis, some cities they destroyed there, and some they set on fire, and then went to Kedasa, belonging to the Tyrians, and to Ptolemais, and to Gaba, and to Cesarea; nor was either Sebaste [Samaria] or Askelon able to oppose the violence with which they were attacked; and when they had burnt these to the ground; they entirely demolished Anthedon and Gaza; many also of the villages that were about every one of those cities were plundered, and an immense slaughter was made of the men who were caught in them.

And thus far the conflict had been between Jews and foreigners; but when they made excursions to Scythopolis, they found Jew that acted as enemies; for as they stood in battle-array with those of Scythopolis, and preferred their own safety before their relation to us, they fought against their own countrymen; nay, their alacrity was so very great, that those of Scythopolis suspected them. These were afraid, therefore, lest they should make an assault upon the city in the night time, and, to their great misfortune, should thereby make an apology for themselves to their own people for their revolt from them. So they commanded them, that in case they would confirm their agreement and demonstrate their fidelity to them, who were of a different nation, they should go out of the city, with their families to a neighboring grove; and when they had done as they were commanded, without suspecting any thing,

the people of Scythopolis lay still for the interval of two days, to tempt them to be secure; but on the third night they watched their opportunity, and cut all their throats, some as they lay unguarded, and some as they lay asleep. The number that was slain was above thirteen thousand, and then they plundered them of all that they had.

Besides this murder at Scythopolis, the other cities rose up against the Jews that were among them; those of Askelon slew two thousand five hundred, and those of Ptolemais two thousand, and put not a few into bonds; those of Tyre also put a great number to death, but kept a greater number in prison; moreover, those of Hippos, and those of Gadara, did the like while they put to death the boldest of the Jews, but kept those of whom they were afraid in custody; as did the rest of the cities of Syria, according as they every one either hated them or were afraid of them; only the Antiochtans the Sidontans, and Apamians spared those that dwelt with them, and would not endure either to kill any of the Jews, or to put them in bonds. And perhaps they spared them, because their own number was so great that they despised their attempts. But I think the greatest part of this favor was owing to their commiseration of those whom they saw to make no innovations. As for the Gerasans, they did no harm to those that abode with them; and for those who had a mind to go away, they conducted them as far as their borders reached. (Josephus, *Wars*, Book 2, Chapter 18, Paragraphs 1, 3, 5)

Famines and Earthquakes

Biblical testimony:

And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. (Matt. 24:7-8 NKJV)

Biblical-Historical testimony:

Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine

throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. (Acts 11:28 NKJV)

Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. (Acts 16:26 NKJV)

Persecution and Death

Biblical testimony:

Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. (Matt. 24:9 NKJV)

But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. (Mark 13:9 NKJV)

But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. (Luke 21:12 NKJV)

Biblical-Historical testimony:

Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. (Acts 5:17-18 NKJV)

Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast [Stephen] out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. (Acts 7:57-58 NKJV)

Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And *because he saw that it*

pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also.
(Acts 12:1-3 NKJV)

The Abomination of Desolation

Biblical testimony:

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. (Luke 21:20 NKJV)

Historical testimony:

John, the leader of the Zealots claimed that the priests were conspiring with the Romans. This made the Zealots afraid. He called for foreign assistance and it was resolved to call in the Idumeans; so they wrote a short letter to this effect. (paraphrased from Josephus, *Wars*, Book 4, Chapter 4, Paragraph 1)

Now [the rulers of the Idumeans] were greatly surprised at the contents of the letter, and at what those that came with it further told them; whereupon they ran about the nation like madmen, and made proclamation that the people should come to war; so a multitude was suddenly got together, sooner indeed than the time appointed in the proclamation, and every body caught up their arms, in order to maintain the liberty of their metropolis; and twenty thousand of them were put into battle-array, and came to Jerusalem... (Josephus, *Wars*, Book 4, Chapter 4, Paragraph 2)

The gates of Jerusalem were shut against the Idumeans and the walls guarded. The Idumeans were in a rage, because they did not receive a ready entrance into the city. The city was besieged on both sides. (paraphrased from Josephus, *Wars*, Book 4, Chapter 4, Paragraph 3)

Biblical testimony:

The end of it shall be with a flood. (Dan. 9:26 NKJV)

Historical testimony:

... [T]here broke out a prodigious storm in the night, with the utmost violence, and very strong winds, with the largest showers of rain, with continued lightnings, terrible thunderings, and amazing concussions and bellowings of the earth, that was in an earthquake. These things were a manifest indication that some destruction was coming upon men, when the system of the world was put into this disorder; and any one would guess that these wonders foreshowed some grand calamities that were coming. (Josephus, *Wars*, Book 4, Chapter 4, Paragraph 5)

Biblical testimony:

Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail. (Rev. 11:19 NKJV)

Historical testimony:

... [T]he zealots were more deeply concerned for the danger [the Idumeans] were in than they were for themselves, and got together, and looked about them to see whether they could devise any means of assisting them. The hotter sort of them thought it best to force the city guards with their arms, and after that to fall into the midst of the city, and publicly open the gates to [the Idumeans].... But the more prudent part of them disapproved of this forcible method, because they saw not only the guards about them very numerous, but [though]t the walls of the city itself were carefully watched, by reason of the Idumeans... [A]s the night was far gone, and the storm very terrible, [the chief guard] gave the guards in the cloisters leave to go to sleep; while it came into the heads of the Zealots to make use of the saws belonging to the temple, and to cut the bars of the gates to pieces. The noise of the wind, and that not inferior sound of the thunder, did here also conspire with their designs, that the noise of the saws was not heard by the others. (Josephus, *Wars*, Book 4, Chapter 4, Paragraph 6)

Biblical testimony:

Therefore when you see the “abomination of desolation,” spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. (Matt. 24:15-21 NKJV; see also Mark 13:14-19; Luke 17:31)

Remember Lot’s wife. (Luke 17:32 NKJV)

Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. (Luke 21:21-23 NKJV)

Historical testimony:

So [the zealots] secretly went out of the temple to the wall of the city, and made use of their saws, and opened that gate which was over against the Idumeans. ... [The Idumeans] entered the city. And had they then fallen upon the city, nothing could have hindered them from destroying the people every man of them, such was the rage they were in at that time... (Josephus, *Wars*, Book 4, Chapter 4, Paragraph 7)

[Instead, the Idumeans] ascended through the city to the temple. The zealots were also in great expectation of their coming, and earnestly waited for them. When [the Idumeans] were entering, [the zealots] came boldly out of the inner temple, and mixing themselves among the Idumeans, they attacked the guards; ... some of whom were killed as they were asleep; but as those that were now awakened made a cry, the whole multitude arose, ... and betook themselves to their own defense; ... they went on boldly, as hop-

ing to overpower them by their numbers; but when ... they perceived the Idumeans were got in; and the greatest part of them laid aside their arms, together with their courage, and betook themselves to lamentations. But some few of the younger sort covered themselves with their armor, and valiantly received the Idumeans, and for a while protected the multitude of old men. Others, indeed, gave a signal to those that were in the city of the calamities they were in; but ... none of them durst come to their assistance, only they returned the terrible echo of wailing, and lamented their misfortunes. A great howling of the women was excited also, ... nor did the Idumeans spare any body; ... so were they slain. ... And now the outer temple was all of it overflowed with blood; and that day, as it came on, they saw eight thousand five hundred dead bodies there. (Josephus, *Wars*, Book 4, Chapter 5, Paragraph 1)

Biblical testimony:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. (2 Peter 3:10 NKJV)

Historical testimony:

But the rage of the Idumeans was not satiated by these slaughters; but they now betook themselves to the city, and plundered every house, and slew every one they met.... I cannot but think that it was because God had doomed this city to destruction, as a polluted city, and was resolved to purge his sanctuary by fire....

Now after these were slain, the Zealots and the multitude of the Idumeans fell upon the people as upon a flock of profane animals, and cut their throats; and for the ordinary sort, they were destroyed in what place soever they caught them. But for the noblemen and the youth, they first caught them and bound them, and shut them up in prison, and put off their slaughter, in hopes that some of them would turn over to their party. ... There were twelve

thousand of the better sort who perished in this manner. (Josephus, *Wars*, Book 4, Chapter 5, Paragraphs 2-3)

If Those Days Had Not Been Cut Short

Biblical testimony:

For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now — and never to be equaled again. (Matt. 24:21 NIV; see also Mark 13:19; Luke 21:23)

Historical testimony:

It is therefore impossible to go distinctly over every instance of these men's iniquity. I shall therefore speak my mind here at once briefly: - That neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world.... (Josephus, *Wars*, Book 5, Chapter 10, Paragraph 5)

Biblical testimony:

And unless *those days were shortened*, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake *those days will be shortened*. (Matt. 24:22 NKJV; see also Mark 13:20)

Historical testimony:

So all hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews, together with their liberty of going out of the city. Then did the famine widen its progress, and devoured the people by whole houses and families; the upper rooms were full of women and children that were dying by famine, and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged; the children also and the young men wandered about the market-places like shadows, all swelled with the famine, and fell down dead, wheresoever their misery seized them. As for burying them, those that were sick themselves were not able to do it; and those that were hearty and well were deterred from doing it by the great multitude of those dead bodies, and by the uncertainty there was how soon

they should die themselves; for many died as they were burying others, and many went to their coffins before that fatal hour was come. Nor was there any lamentations made under these calamities, nor were heard any mournful complaints; but the famine confounded all natural passions; for those who were just going to die looked upon those that were gone to rest before them with dry eyes and open mouths. A deep silence also, and a kind of deadly night, had seized upon the city; while yet the robbers were still more terrible than these miseries were themselves; for they brake open those houses which were no other than graves of dead bodies, and plundered them of what they had; and carrying off the coverings of their bodies, went out laughing, and tried the points of their swords in their dead bodies; and, in order to prove what metal they were made of they thrust some of those through that still lay alive upon the ground; but for those that entreated them to lend them their right hand and their sword to dispatch them, they were too proud to grant their requests, and left them to be consumed by the famine. Now every one of these died with their eyes fixed upon the temple, and left the seditious alive behind them. Now the seditious at first gave orders that the dead should be buried out of the public treasury, as not enduring the stench of their dead bodies. But afterwards, when they could not do that, they had them cast down from the walls into the valleys beneath.

However, when [General] Titus, in going his rounds along those valleys, saw them full of dead bodies, and the thick putrefaction running about them, he gave a groan; and, spreading out his hands to heaven, called God to witness that this was not his doing; and such was the sad case of the city itself.... (Josephus, *Wars*, Book 5, Chapter 12, Paragraphs 3-4)

Hereupon some of the deserters, having no other way, leaped down from the wall immediately, while others of them went out of the city with stones, as if they would fight them; but thereupon they fled away to the Romans. But here a worse fate accompanied these than what they had found within the city; and they met with a quicker dispatch from the too great abundance they had among

the Romans, than they could have done from the famine among the Jews.... Nor does it seem to me that any misery befell the Jews that was more terrible than this, since in one night's time about two thousand of these deserters were thus dissected. (Josephus, *Wars*, Book 5, Chapter 13, Paragraph 4)

The Flood, Sodom, and Jerusalem

Biblical testimony:

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and *destroyed them all*. It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left *Sodom*, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and *destroyed them all*. (Luke 17:26-29 NIV)

Historical testimony:

... And here I cannot but speak my mind, and what the concern I am under dictates to me, and it is this: I suppose, that had the Romans made any longer delay in coming against these villains, that the city would either have been swallowed up by the ground opening upon them, or been *overflowed by water*, or else been destroyed by such *thunder as the country of Sodom perished by*, for it had brought forth a generation of men much more atheistical than were those that suffered such punishments; for by their madness it was that *all the people came to be destroyed* [emphasis ours] (Josephus, *Wars*, Book 5, Chapter 13, Paragraph 6)

Signs and Wonders

Biblical testimony:

For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. (Matt. 24:27 NKJV)

Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Matt. 24:29-30 NKJV; see also Mark 13:24-26)

And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near. (Luke 21:25-28 NKJV)

Historical testimony:

Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these deceivers, and such as belied God himself; while they did not attend nor give credit to the signs that were so evident, and did so plainly foretell their future desolation, but, like men infatuated, without either eyes to see or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them. Thus there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year. Thus also before the Jews' rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus [Nisan], and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright

day time; which lasted for half an hour. This light seemed to be a good sign to the unskillful, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes, as to portend those events that followed immediately upon it. At the same festival also, a heifer, as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple. Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor, which was there made of one entire stone, was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night. Now those that kept watch in the temple came hereupon running to the captain of the temple, and told him of it; who then came up thither, and not without great difficulty was able to shut the gate again. This also appeared to the vulgar to be a very happy prodigy, as if God did thereby open them the gate of happiness. But the men of learning understood it, that the security of their holy house was dissolved of its own accord, and that the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies. So these publicly declared that the signal foreshowed the desolation that was coming upon them. Besides these, a few days after that feast, on the one and twentieth day of the month Artemisius [Jyar], a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared: I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. (Josephus, *Wars*, Book 6, Chapter 5, Paragraph 3)

The Destruction of Jerusalem

Biblical testimony:

Do you not see all these things? Do you see these great buildings? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

(Matt. 24:2 and Mark 13:2 NKJV; see also Luke 19:43-44 and 21:6)

Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. (Matt. 24:34 NKJV)

Historical testimony:

... [Titus] gave orders to the soldiers both to burn and to plunder the city; who did nothing indeed that day; but on the next day they set fire to the repository of the archives, to Acra, to the council-house, and to the place called Oph-las; at which time the fire proceeded as far as the palace of queen Helena, which was in the middle of Acra; the lanes also were burnt down, as were also those houses that were full of the dead bodies of such as were destroyed by famine. (Josephus, *Wars*, Book 6, Chapter 6, Paragraph 3)

On the next day the Romans drove the robbers out of the lower city, and set all on fire as far as Siloam. These soldiers were indeed glad to see the city destroyed. But they missed the plunder, because the seditious had carried off all their effects, and were retired into the upper city; for they did not yet at all repent of the mischiefs they had done, but were insolent, as if they had done well; for, as they saw the city on fire, they appeared cheerful, and put on joyful countenances, in expectation, as they said, of death to end their miseries. Accordingly, as the people were now slain, the holy house was burnt down, and the city was on fire, there was nothing further left for the enemy to do.... (Josephus, *Wars*, Book 6, Chapter 7, Paragraph 2)



Though Josephus does not confirm this, others did. The fire melted the gold of the temple so that it ran down into the cracks in the floors. Not only did the Romans tear down the temple, stone by stone. After the ruins cooled, the Roman soldiers pried up every stone in order to retrieve the gold. The temple was destroyed. Not one stone was left on another.

For eighteen hundred years, these historical events were common knowledge among Christians. Yet for reasons unknown, the implica-

tions were never systematically explored. Since the rise of modern futurist views of prophecy in the 19th and 20th centuries, this history has largely been forgotten. The purpose of this book is to help revive knowledge of that past and explore the implications, not just in regard to the *conclusion* of the Bible, but the implications for the *beginning* as well.

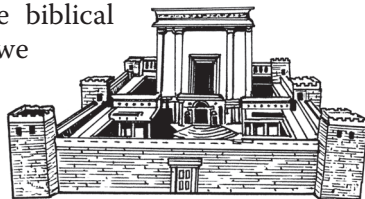
CHAPTER 4

THE END OF A COVENANT WORLD

What we have suggested so far is a completely different understanding of end-times prophecy than what most modern Christians believe today. This view places the coming of Christ and the great tribulation in the *past* rather than in our *future*. But it is impossible to stop there. A shift in the timing of these events calls for a re-examination of key biblical terms and phrases commonly associated with prophecy.

The “Last Days” of What?

The first issue that comes to mind is the biblical understanding of the “last days.” How should we understand the “last days”? The Bible shows the last days were a contemporary reality during New Testament times. Peter claims that what happened at Pentecost fulfilled Old Testament prophecies concerning the last days:



But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk ... But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the *last days*, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh.’” (Acts 2:14-17 NKJV)

The writer of Hebrews gives another example of the first century setting of the last days:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these *last days* spoken to us by His Son. (Heb. 1:1-2 NKJV)

Everywhere we look in the New Testament, we find the early Church living in the last days. Here is another related example in Jude:

But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, “In the *last times* there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.” These are the men who divide *you*, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit. (Jude 17-19 NIV)

The scoffers in Jude’s day — the scoffers the apostles struggled with — were proof the predicted “last times” had come upon *them*.¹

John makes the point of reference in the first century absolutely clear by saying:

Little children, it is the *last hour*; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. ... These things I have written to you *concerning those who try to deceive you*. (1 John 2:18, 26 NKJV)

John is hardly writing about things to come thousands of years in the future. Does it not appear that John deals with circumstances in his day? Put yourself in the sandals of those early Christians who first received John’s letter. He told them that *they* were living in the last hour and that many antichrists *had already come* in his day, nearly 2000 years ago.

The biblical testimony consistently shows the last days were New Testament times. But that raises a question: If the last days were back then, how is it possible that we are still around? Obviously, the world did not end in the first century!

The problem behind this immediate objection is that many assume the “last days” refer to the last days of planet Earth and our space-time universe as we know it. Our expectations about what prophecy *should* be about betray us once again. The biblical answer is that the last days have nothing to do with planet Earth or our physical universe. They relate to the last days of an *age* – a *covenant age*. Those living in New Testament times lived at the end of the old covenant era with its law, priesthood, types, shadows, and worship order all bound up in the land and temple of Israel. Author David Chilton explains it this way:

The Biblical expression *Last Days* properly refers to the period from the Advent of Christ until the destruction of

Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the “last days” of Israel during the transition period from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant.²

Another author, Kurt Simmons, sums up this view by saying:

Although mistakenly assumed to refer to the end of the universe, the last days plainly refer to the end of the Mosaic age and economy.³

What this means is that we are not living in the biblical “last days” as is often taught today. The last days ended with the destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, and the entire old covenant sacrificial law system. Those were the last days of the old covenant age.⁴

The “End” of What?

The same covenant-related definition applies to the biblical “end” referenced throughout the New Testament. Many naturally assume that this is a reference to the “end of the world.” If that is the proper meaning, then the “end” remains in our future, because we are obviously still here. But how would devout Jews, who knew their Old Testament well, understand apostolic references to the “end”?

The answer goes all the way back to the beginning of the nation of Israel. Moses lived in the midst of an unbelieving and wicked generation. Just before his death, he pronounced God’s foreknowledge of the coming *end of Israel* by saying:

“I will hide my face from them,” he said,” and see what *their end* will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful. (Deut. 32:20 NIV)

This quote comes from a passage often referred to as the Song of Moses. Moses drew a parallel. Like the first generation in the wilderness that rebelled against Moses, so would be the last generation who would rebel against the promised Messiah.

The Song of Moses provides some Old Testament context for the Olivet Discourse. When Jesus claimed that not one stone of the temple would be left standing, the disciples asked an immediate question:

“Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming, and of *the end of the age*?” (Matt. 24:3 NIV)

They equated the end of the old covenant age with the coming of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem with its temple. This teaching of the end of one age and the coming of another is pervasive throughout the New Testament.⁵ It is the coming of Christ in judgment that marks the complete arrival of this long-expected “age to come.”

This explains why Peter could write: “The end of all things is near” in 1 Peter 4:7 (NIV). Peter is not talking about the physical universe coming to an end. He refers to the end of the old order – the “world” of the old covenant which was made obsolete by the arrival of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

Things become clearer when we realize Paul understood his place at the pivotal point in *redemptive* history. After referencing Israel’s 40-year journey in the wilderness he writes:

Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, *upon whom the ends of the ages have come.* (1 Cor. 10:11 NKJV)

The end of the ages came upon Paul and his contemporaries.

The Focus of Prophecy

All of these passages should highlight the central concern of prophecy. Prophecy is primarily concerned with the redemption of God’s people. The end goal of all of God’s acts in redemptive history is related primarily to salvation from sin. Note how the famous prophecy of Daniel’s 70 weeks is anchored in redemption:

Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, *to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness,* To seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined. (Dan. 9:24-26 NKJV)

The entire prophecy revolves around the ultimate salvation of God's people. The timing of Daniel's 70 weeks takes us right up to the work of Christ. Jesus is the "Anointed One" who was cut off, sacrificed for the sins of his people.

Daniel's prophecy also gives us the context for fulfillment. Notice that the "end" in Daniel's prophecy relates to the destruction of the city and sanctuary. Author Kurt Simmons notes both the timing and this covenant context of Daniel's prophecy:

The time limitations of Daniel, and the fact that virtually every other Old Testament reference to the latter days has a Jewish context, renders impossible an interpretation that would extend this prophetic period into our modern era. Add the fact that Daniel expressly states that the prophecies he wrote would be fulfilled when the power of the Jewish nation was scattered and destroyed (Dan. 12:7; *cf.* 10:14; 9:24-27), and the conclusion is inescapable: The latter days is inexorably set in a first century, Jewish context; *viz.*, the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in A.D. 70.⁶

Jesus taught nothing new in his Olivet Discourse; he simply expounded on what Daniel foresaw nearly five hundred years earlier. Daniel, along with the other prophets, is the background for all prophecy in the New Testament! Like the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy is fulfilled by AD 70 when the old covenant world, symbolized by Jerusalem and the temple, finally passed away in the flames of AD 70.

Much of the book of Hebrews is dedicated to a theological defense of the same *covenant transition*:

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah — not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will

make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” In that He says, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. *Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.* (Heb. 8:6-14 NKJV)

The writer of Hebrews understood the old covenant had been made obsolete by Christ, but he also knew that it had not yet been completely removed for the Hebrew Christians in his day. Paul circumcised Timothy, the son of a Jewess, to maintain a good testimony to the Jews. Paul also appeared in the temple to undergo purification according to the Law of Moses.⁷ The entire Judaic system was “growing old” and was, at the time of the writing of Hebrews, “ready to vanish away.” That happened in AD 70.

The Elements Will Melt

We must understand this covenant context and redemptive focus as we examine Peter’s famous prophecy. Peter writes along the same lines when he says:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, *being on fire*, and the *elements will melt with fervent heat*? (2 Peter 3:10-12 NKJV)

At first glance in modern English this appears to be talking about the end of our physical universe. But a close examination shows that Peter is talking about nothing other than the final end of the old covenant world. The “elements” in this passage are often thought to be the stuff

of the universe, things related to the periodic table, atoms, and basic chemistry. Yet the Greek word for “elements” is *stoichion* which is used seven times in the New Testament. *Stoichion* elsewhere refers to the regulations of the Mosaic Law. Paul uses *stoichion* twice in Galatians 4 in a passage centered on Paul’s discussion to Gentile Christians regarding the Law of Moses:

Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements [*stoichion*] of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons... But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements [*stoichion*], to which you desire again to be in bondage? *You observe days and months and seasons and years.* (Gal. 4:3-5, 9-10 NKJV)

Paul uses *stoichion* to refer directly to the customs and practices found in the Law of Moses. Every other use of *stoichion* in the entire New Testament refers to the elemental things of the old covenant. Chilton explains the usage of *stoichion* by saying:

What these “literalists” [i.e., those who suggest 2 Peter 3 speaks about the physical universe and planet Earth] fail to recognize is that although the word *elements* is used several times in the New Testament, it is *never* used in connection with the physical universe! The term is *always* used in connection with the Old Covenant order (see Gal. 4:3, 9; Col. 2:8, 20).⁸

That presents a question for 2 Peter 3:10-12. If *stoichion* is used everywhere else in the New Testament in reference to the old covenant Mosaic economy, why would it refer to something different in Peter’s prophecy? There is no doubt that fire *literally* burned up the elements of the old covenant world in AD 70 when the Roman armies torched the temple and city of Jerusalem.

The “Heavens and Earth”

Some might see the logic of that portion of Peter’s prophecy in reference to the passing away of the old covenant economy. But what about Peter’s previous statement:

By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. (2 Peter 3:7 NIV)

Surely, this must reference our entire universe? That is how many read it. But did Peter change subject midstream? No, he is making a symbolic reference to the Law of Moses and old covenant order defined by Israel. He is speaking along the same lines as the prophet Isaiah who communicates in much the same way:

But I am the LORD your God, Who divided the sea whose waves roared — The LORD of hosts is His name. And I have put My words in your mouth; I have covered you with the shadow of My hand, That I may plant the heavens, Lay the foundations of the earth, And say to Zion, “*You are My people.*” (Is. 51:15-16 NKJV)

Isaiah uses prophetic poetry to recount the crossing of the Red Sea as Israel left Egypt. God placed his words in Israel’s mouth at Sinai with the giving of the Law. Yet notice how the prophet alludes to Israel’s history as a creation of “heaven and earth.” Israel became God’s new creation at the time of the Exodus. Author Don Preston explains:

God gave His word to Israel to establish their world. Their world was spoken of here as the heavens and earth. This is confirmed when Jehovah says He gave the Word to Israel, not only to establish the heavens and earth but *to make them His people*. Isaiah places the establishing of the heavens and earth, and the entering into covenantal relationship as when God gave His law to Israel. This was at Sinai. Therefore, in the eyes of God and Israel, the heaven and earth were established at Sinai. Obviously not the physical creation, but the world of Israel.⁹

Peter is speaking about the passing away of the heavens and earth in terms symmetrical with the prophet Isaiah. The difference is that, in Peter’s day, the Law and temple system had reached their designed end

with the coming and work of the Messiah. Just as the formation of Israel and giving of the Law was the metaphorical creation of “heaven and earth,” so the destruction of the Judaic society, the Law, the priesthood, and temple would be the passing away of Israel’s “heaven and earth.”¹⁰

Author John Noë also explains why 2 Peter 3 references the fiery destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70 by saying:

Not one shred of evidence exists that 1st-century Jews and Jewish Christians were anticipating a cosmic catastrophe that would terminate time, burn up planet Earth, and end human history. Our modern-day view would have shocked any biblically literate Old-Testament Jew, and should give us a jolt, too. We must recognize that the Holy Spirit is consistent with his use of words and concepts in Scripture. The melting and dissolving of Peter’s “elements” was a totally covenantal transformation, not a cosmic conflagration.¹¹

This symbolism sheds light upon Jesus’ use of apocalyptic language in the Olivet Discourse. The sun and moon being darkened and stars falling from the sky are prophetic “collapsing universe” language used commonly by the prophets to describe national judgments. It was “lights out” for national Israel – the day of judgment had arrived.¹²

According to His Promise

There is one more aspect of Peter’s prophecy that shows his intent. He connects this prophecy to a promise Jesus gave:

Nevertheless we, *according to His promise*, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3:13 NKJV)

Where did Jesus mention anything related to “heaven and earth?” *Jesus promised “heaven and earth” would pass away in the Olivet Discourse:*

Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. *Heaven and earth will pass away*, but My words will by no means pass away. (Matt. 24:34-35 NKJV)

Peter understood the implications of the promise Jesus made in the Olivet Discourse. If Jesus promised that the present “heavens and earth”

would pass away, then a “new heavens and new earth” would be in store for them. They looked for a new “heaven and earth” according to his promise. This new “heaven and earth” would be the home of righteousness for God’s people because, by faith, sin had been put away forever through the sacrifice of Christ.

Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount provides the inseparable link between the Mosaic Law and the “heaven and earth.” Jesus taught the people:

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.
(Matt. 5:17-18 NKJV)

The significance of Jesus’ promise in this text eludes many, many Christians. It is so important in the context of New Testament prophecy that you simply must read it a second time:

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, *till heaven and earth pass away*, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.
(Matt. 5:17-18 NKJV)

Jesus promised that *until* heaven and earth pass away, not one tiny bit of the Law and prophets will pass from the Law till everything is fulfilled. Do we observe every detail of the Law today? *Every* jot and every tittle? Today, Christians do not observe the sacrificial system, which is far more than a jot. In general, Christians neither observe the dietary regulations of the Law, nor do they observe the Jewish calendar commanded in the Law, which is far more than a tittle. They are gone. *These elements of the Mosaic Law have passed away. This reality provides powerful evidence that the biblical heavens and earth have passed away!*

Those who believe the New Testament references to “heaven and earth” refer strictly to the physical universe have a severe problem in light of Jesus’ teaching. If “heaven and earth” refer to our universe, then Jesus’ teaching requires the Law of Moses to be observed *in every detail* until the end of our physical universe! Jesus is clear. Not one jot or tittle would pass from the Law *until heaven and earth pass away*. This is one more biblical demonstration that “heaven and earth” did pass away in

historical finality at the coming of Christ and the fiery destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Symphonic Unity in Biblical Prophecy

We will have more to say about these details of New Testament prophecy in the pages to come as we delve into the Genesis debate. They have profound implications for the heated Christian debates over the flood and creation. But what we hope to impress on the reader at this point is that there is an essential unity to the story the New Testament tells. Jesus and his apostles were on the same page. They spoke about the same things, even though they spoke with their own individual personalities. Prophecy communicates like a great symphony. The Holy Spirit inspired many different authors to play their unique role in unveiling the fulfillment of the redemptive story in the first century. When we pay attention to the original audience context, the theology of the New Testament, and compare Scripture with Scripture, New Testament prophecy comes together as a tapestry of inter-related expectations and fulfillments.

There is no chaos in New Testament prophecy. It is one recurring, coherent message that reflects the theological, apologetic, and physical struggle of the real people we call the first “Christians.” The early Church rightly understood themselves to be on the brink, in the very midst of a great change in redemptive history. They knew their generation and the events they anticipated and witnessed in real life would forever change the world. Their expectations dovetail, not merely with each other, but with all the prophecies of the Old Testament as well.¹³ Like Jesus, they preached a kingdom that had been prophesied by all the prophets who came before them. As Peter said, “Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days” (Acts 3:24 NIV).

But don’t take our word for it. Check it out for yourself. Read the New Testament from beginning to end with this perspective and see if it doesn’t make good sense from our view. What we have presented in these first chapters is called “preterism.” It comes from the Latin word *praeter* which means “past.” It appears in various forms all through Church history.¹⁴ One of its modern proponents, R. C. Sproul, sums up the key elements by saying:

The great service preterism performs is to focus attention on two major issues. The first is the time-frame references of the New Testament regarding eschatological prophecy.

The preterist is a sentinel standing guard against frivolous and superficial attempts to downplay or explain away the force of these references. The second major issue is the destruction of Jerusalem. This event certainly spelled the end of a crucial redemptive-historical epoch. It must be viewed as the end of some age. It also represents a significant visitation of the Lord in judgment and a vitally important “day of the Lord.”¹⁵

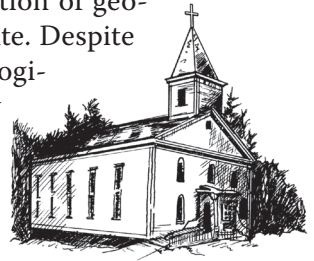
We will reference preterism as we examine the Genesis debate among Christians. The pages to come will demonstrate the monumental implications of preterism for debates over Genesis.

PART TWO

CHAPTER 5

THE DIVIDE: 1830

One of the central points of conflict in the Genesis debate is geology. The current dispute over the true interpretation of geological evidence illustrates the entire origins debate. Despite tremendous amounts of popular writing on geological items such as fossils and layers of strata, many Christians are unfamiliar with the *history* of the rise of geology in the 18th and 19th centuries. This deficiency leads to some key mistakes. If these mistakes are left unchallenged they will skew the entire debate.



Geology and Christianity

One popular misconception is that the earliest geologists presented their work in order to overthrow the reigning Christian understanding of Genesis. Those who hold this notion imply that theories which involve millions of years of time are part and parcel of Charles Darwin's theory of biological evolution. In other words, Christians who accept old-earth geology are accepting evolution. Henry Morris (1918-2006), widely acclaimed as the father of modern young-earth creationism, sums up the view of millions:

From our point of view, however, any interpretation of Genesis which accommodates the standard system of evolutionary geological ages is a clear-cut compromise with atheistic evolutionism, and it is very sad that Christians who profess to believe the Bible as the Word of God will not acknowledge this.¹

Those who agree with Morris imply that Charles Lyell (1797-1875) and other early geologists acted in a virtual conspiracy with Charles Darwin (1809-1882). The claim is that, by introducing long ages, Lyell essentially became the co-founder of biological evolution.

We believe this popular view is based on a shallow understanding of the history of geology. *Principles of Geology*, Lyell's landmark work on geology published in 1830, predates Darwin's 1859 *Origin of Species* by nearly three decades. Although Darwin's theory of biological evolution did rely on Lyell's geology, it does not logically follow that Lyell's geology is, by nature, evolutionary. Lyell's work on the geological column could as easily be interpreted as the material record of God's creation of life.

Most overlook the fact that Lyell strongly objected to Darwin's theory of species transmutation for many years. Ian Taylor, an opponent of Lyell's old-earth geology, explains:

In his earlier writings Lyell stuck rigidly to the biblical dogma of the fixity or immutability of the species and in this matter was opposed to Darwin's proposal of the mutability of species – that is, one species could evolve into another. ... The sudden appearance of new species in the fossil record was, to Lyell, evidence that re-creation had taken place, while, conversely, the appearance of fossil creatures in several strata and their absence in succeeding strata indicated extinction of that species.²

Lyell did finally capitulate and accept Darwin's theory in the last couple years of his life, but he understood that his *geology* was distinct from Darwin's view of *biological evolution*. All geologists at the time accepted Lyell's geological framework for the age of the earth, but few accepted the raw atheistic naturalism inherent in Darwin's theory.

The Problem for Darwin: Geology

A host of evangelical scientists, such as James Dana and J.W. Dawson, remained committed and vocal theists as they practiced their old-earth science. Even those scientists who accepted the mechanism Darwin suggested were generally committed to the idea that God was involved in the rise of life. This view is essentially what we know today as "theistic evolution." It was this view, not Darwin's naturalistic view, which actually became known as Darwinism in his day. Darwin's

theory implied atheism, and that was too much for most to swallow at the time.

The initial response to Darwinism by conservative Christian leaders in the late 19th century was to “unite in rejecting Darwin’s transmutation hypothesis as simply bad science.”³ Many notable scientists followed this approach throughout the 20th century. It was not until the 1920s that Darwin’s atheistic naturalism became widely accepted. This, coupled with a developing understanding of genetics and mutation, was called Neo-Darwinism. Darwin’s triumph did not happen in an instant, but took about 60 years.

The irony is that Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism face great difficulty today in that geological evidence has, to date, not confirmed the theory. Darwin predicted geologists would find a host of missing links which would construct a great chain of life from the earliest organisms to man. Darwin explains this as a real problem for his view a little more than a decade after the initial release of *Origin of Species*. He noted the problem when he wrote:

Why is not every geological formation and every stratum full of such intermediate links? Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely graduated organic chain; and this is the most obvious and serious objection which can be urged against the theory.⁴

The popular phrase which sums up Darwin’s view is “amoeba to man” evolution. The problem for Darwin’s theory is that geologists haven’t found the many missing links he predicted would be found. More than *a hundred years of geological research* has failed to confirm his theory. Stephen J. Gould, the prominent evolutionary biologist, emphasizes the problem for Darwinian evolution:

The absence of fossil evidence for intermediary stages between major transitions in organic design, indeed our inability, even in our imagination, to construct functional intermediates in many cases, has been a persistent and nagging problem for gradualistic accounts of evolution.⁵

In order to explain this embarrassing reality, evolutionists have developed a new theory of biological evolution called “Punctuated Equilibrium.” This theory contends that species remain relatively unchanged for long periods of time. When substantial changes between the species

do occur, they happen very fast – so fast we are left with virtually no fossil documentation in the geological record. (This development is an admission that the fossil record shows nothing about the origin of species except when the species were created.)

Again, Lyell's geology is an entirely separate issue from either of these forms of biological evolution. Geology continues to provide a reasonable argument against Darwin's biological evolution.

The Rise of Intelligent Design

More recently, some scientists have presented an additional case against all forms of “amoeba to man” evolution. What Darwin thought were the earliest and simplest forms of life involve remarkable complexity. Darwin could never have dreamed that the most basic living organisms are intricate systems which involve perfectly functional components. This complexity cannot be explained by gradual development over time, because all of the components must be present and perfectly functional for these organisms to exist at all. Some scientists are developing a formal case that even the most basic life-forms involve “irreducible complexity.”⁶ This implies that incremental biological evolution over time, as evolutionists conceive it, is simply impossible.

The age of the earth is irrelevant to the “irreducible complexity” argument for “intelligent design” – a technical term for creation. One can accept an earth that is millions or even billions of years old and still reject biological evolution. Many scientists do. Author William Dembski, a leader in the Intelligent Design movement, explains:

Suppose you do not accept the Darwinian picture of natural history, that is, you do not believe that the vast panoply of life evolved through undirected naturalistic processes. Presumably, then, you are a creationist. But does this make you a young earth creationist? Ever since Darwin's *Origin of Species* Darwinists have cast the debate in these terms: either you are with us, or you are a creationist, by which they mean a young earth creationist. But of course it does not follow, logically or otherwise, that by rejecting fully naturalistic evolution you automatically embrace a literal reading of Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. Rejecting fully naturalistic evolution does not entail accepting young earth creationism.⁷

Creationism does not hinge on the age of our universe. Dembski astutely points out that belief in a young earth follows from a particular method of *interpreting* Genesis 1 and 2, i.e., a *literal* interpretation.

Lyell – Cornerstone or Capstone of Geology?

A related misconception about the history of geology is the belief that Lyell's 1830 book was an entirely new concoction. It is common to view Lyell's work as initiating a radically new concept of a very old earth. This understanding implies that modern geology dates to Lyell and is, in reality, a doctrine self-consciously created to overthrow the Christian beliefs of the day.*

When the history is studied closely, the reality is quite different. Ian Taylor makes this sobering admission:

The early nineteenth century geologists, such as William Buckland went out with the intention of finding geological evidence to support the Genesis account. These men were neither fools nor knaves, yet they came away from all they saw converted to the idea of long ages.⁸

The irony of this situation was that in the nearly thirty years between Lyell's *Principles of Geology* and Darwin's *Origin*, the most fruitful and practical work in geology was carried out by men such as Adam Sedgwick, William Buckland, William Conybeare, Roderick Murchison, Louis Agassiz, and others, most of whom in those early years were convinced of the historicity and universality of the Noachian Flood.⁹

The science of geology was not consciously formulated to undermine Christianity. Geology developed and matured as a direct result of the practical needs of the 18th and 19th century. The industrial revolution, with its demand for transportation, prompted the construction of canals and railways across England. The innovation of the steam engine required the mining of coal to power trains, ships, and industrial factories. All of these activities led scientists, a significant number of whom were Christians, to gain first-hand experience of the geological detail which lay under earth's surface. These early geologists came to realize that specific fossils were segregated in distinct layers of strata.

* We will investigate the Genesis creation account in Chapters 13-18.

Geology matured as a direct result of the practical needs of the 18th and 19th century.

Lyell's work, released in 1830, was simply not new. He relied on the earlier work of an English geologist and canal engineer by the name of William "Strata" Smith (1769-1839) who observed that rock formations appear in layers or strata. Smith deduced that each of these layers could be recognized and catalogued by the distinctive fossils they contained. As his knowledge of the precise order of these layers increased, he could make *exact predictions* about the location of coal deposits. In 1793 "Strata Smith" made the first geological map of Great Britain.

Lyell combined Smith's work with his own field experience to produce his *Principles of Geology* in 1830. There is no doubt that Lyell's book was a major accomplishment. It was the *capstone* of practical field work that stretched back into the 1600s with Burnet,¹⁰ Hooke,¹¹ Lhwyd,¹² Ray,¹³ Steno,¹⁴ and Woodward.¹⁵ To this day it looms large in the field of geology.

The Coincidence of Geology and Theology

It is at this point that we suggest an amazing coincidence of history. Something else developed in the British Isles concurrent with modern geology: *a theological view of planet Earth's history and future*. In order to understand the importance of this theological development we must look at the contemporary religious situation in England during the days of Smith and Lyell.

The early 1800s saw the formation of a small group of Christians known as the Plymouth Brethren. They were united in the belief that the Bible must be interpreted according to a strictly literal method. The Brethren also had a fascination with Bible prophecy. Historian Timothy Weber explains:

Along with other British evangelicals of that period, the Brethren were deeply interested in biblical prophecy. In contrast to many of them, however, the Brethren were futurists who believed that Bible prophecy pointed to future events, those scheduled to take place just before Christ's return.¹⁶

Their prophetic view was known as premillennialism because they believed the second coming would inaugurate a literal, 1000-year reign of Christ from Jerusalem. Premillennialism was not unique to the

Brethren. Morgan Edwards (1722-1795) unsuccessfully promoted it in America during the 1780's. Manuel Lacunza (1731-1801), a Spanish Jesuit scholar, developed a similar view in his massive 1790 tome titled *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty*. (Lacunza's defense of premillennialism was published under the pseudonym "Ben-Ezra.") Edward Irving (1792-1834) drew crowds in London to hear exposition of premillennialism during the 1820s.

What distinguished the Brethren is how they further refined premillennial theology. They also promoted a theological belief known as dispensationalism. Like other dispensationalists of the time, the Brethren broke all human history into distinct time periods or "dispensations" in which God dealt with mankind according to distinct principles. The millennial reign of Christ to come would be the seventh and final dispensation of earth history. Historian Ovid Need gives this definition:

Dispensationalism: a philosophy that divides history into a number of distinct eras in each of which the mode of God's operations, if not nature's, is unique.¹⁷

Need is correct to mention nature in his definition. Dispensationalism eventually produced the premillennialist view of nature. Because of their theology, dispensationalists began to expect radical changes in *nature* to match their belief in radical changes in *dispensations*. For example, they concluded that Adam's physical world radically changed after the fall. Likewise, the Genesis flood ostensibly caused a comprehensive physical change across planet Earth. Dispensationalists also applied the same approach to the future as well. They consistently argued for coming world changes during the "millennium," where nature will be more or less like the pre-flood world. They also expected the "new heaven and new earth" to be a physical return to Adam's pre-fall world: no biological death or pain or sorrow, etc. The full details and implications of those views took decades to develop, but their prophetic system had repercussions for the rest of the Bible, including Genesis.[†]

In the early days of dispensational premillennialism the most talented speaker among the Plymouth Brethren was John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). He added a new element to dispensational premillennialism by insisting that the Bible contains two completely separate di-

† We will investigate these views of nature in Chapters 11-12.

vine plans in history. One plan relates to God's chosen people, the Jews, while the other plan relates to God's heavenly people, the Church.

Darby's new insight meant that the Bible could only be read properly by keeping these two plans in mind. To Darby, it was an error to apply biblical passages to the Church which were meant for the Jews and equally wrong to apply to the Jews what was written to the Church. Darby's views were extremely controversial at the time for they were entirely novel.

The Other Capstone Event of 1830

The Plymouth Brethren began to gain followers but their system, like geology at the time, was still in development. Before 1830 dispensational premillennialists believed that the so-called "rapture" would only take place after Christians lived through a coming great tribulation. In other words the Brethren, like all dispensationalists of the time, "believed that the rapture would occur at the end of the tribulation, at Christ's second advent."¹⁸

Ironically, the turning point came in 1830. That was the year the Plymouth Brethren commissioned Darby to go to Glasgow, Scotland, to investigate reports of an outbreak of charismatic gifts of the Spirit among some Scottish premillennialists. There, Darby met Margaret MacDonald, a teenage girl who claimed prophetic gifts of the Spirit. She believed that through these miraculous gifts of revelation she received special insight about the second coming of Christ. She claimed to see in advance how the present dispensation would come to an end. Her insight would, in time, forever change the landscape of both English and American theology.

Margaret MacDonald's idea was brand new to Darby. She envisioned that the rapture of the church would take place *before* the great tribulation. This *imminent* rapture would be a secret "catching away" of all believers seven years before the second coming. Darby instantly agreed. As a result of what Darby experienced in 1830,

Darby understood the rapture and the second coming as two separate events. At the rapture, Christ will come *for* his saints, and at the second coming, he will come *with* his saints. Between these two events the great tribulation would occur. With the church removed, God could resume dealing with Israel, and Daniel's seventieth week could take place as predicted.¹⁹

Later, Darby explained that a secret, pre-tribulational rapture was the natural result of his method of reading biblical prophecy. He formed his defense of the pre-tribulational rapture by keeping the divine plan for Israel distinct from the divine plan for the Church. He claimed that the Church could not be involved in the prophecies about the coming worldwide great tribulation. According to Darby, those events were related solely to God's dealings with the Jews:

It is this conviction, that the Church is properly heavenly in its calling and relationship with Christ, forming no part of the course of events of the earth, which makes its rapture so simple and clear; and on the other hand, it shows how the denial of its rapture brings down the Church to an earthly position, and destroys its whole spiritual character and position. Prophecy does not relate to heaven. The Christian's hope is not a prophetic subject at all.²⁰

From 1830 on, Darby dogmatically claimed the Church must be "raptured" from the earth before the great tribulation could begin.

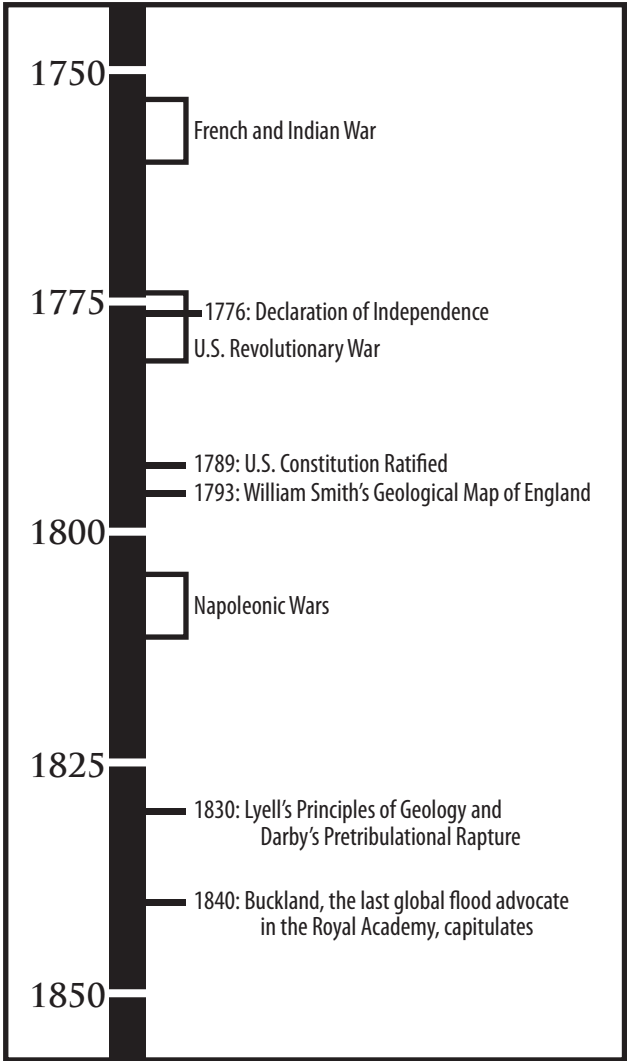
Darby combined dispensational premillennial theology with his doctrine of a secret, pre-tribulational rapture (ultimately, from Margaret MacDonald). This innovation was the *capstone* of modern dispensational premillennial theology. To this day, the imminent pre-tribulational rapture view dominates modern futurist views of prophecy among evangelical Christians.

The 1830 Synchronicity

We have arrived at an amazing historical synchronicity. The modern doctrine of pre-tribulational rapture, dispensational premillennialism was completed in 1830 – the same year Lyell published his *Principles of Geology*! The rise of modern geology and modern dispensational premillennialism took place at the same time and in the same English locale. Both reached major milestones in 1830. Darby's work on biblical prophecy and Lyell's work on geology would both come to dominate 20th century American culture, both religious and secular.

At this point it may not be obvious that this disparate parallel history has anything to do with the Genesis debate. While Lyell is often at the center of controversy, why would Darby's teaching be relevant to the Genesis debate? The answer is that Darby's prophetic system became the foundation for a coming challenge to Lyell's geology. Many

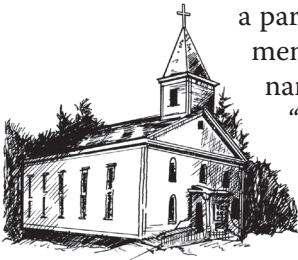
years would pass before the violent collision between Lyell’s old-earth geology and Darby’s dispensational premillennialism would become manifest, but the two histories in the opening decades of the 19th century, even the two climactic events of 1830, were destined to create a titanic struggle once the implications worked their way out in history. It was only a matter of time.



CHAPTER 6

WORLDS COLLIDE: LYELL VS. DARBY

The Liberalism/Fundamentalism Context



The rise of young-earth creationism among conservative Christians is a part of the wider debate between liberalism and fundamentalism. Liberalism gained traction in mainline seminaries and churches as a direct result of the prevailing “higher criticism” popular in Europe during the second half of the 19th century. Liberals concluded that there is nothing supernatural about the Bible, so they denied divine inspiration. They also denied miracles such as the virgin birth and resurrection of Jesus. Because of their bias against all things supernatural they also embraced Darwinian evolution.

The reaction against liberalism in America came to be known as fundamentalism, a term coined as a result of a 1909 manifesto edited by R.A. Torrey titled *The Fundamentals*. The movement defended the divine nature and inspiration of the Bible as well as miracles. In response to liberal claims, fundamentalists made literal Bible interpretation the central tenet of their theology. This strategy defended all biblical miracles against the new liberalism’s inherent naturalism, but it also produced a key side-effect. Fundamentalism became synonymous with dispensational premillennialism because it championed a “literal” approach to prophecy. The last of the original five “fundamental” doctrines in Torrey’s book was belief in “Christ’s personal, pre-millennial and imminent second coming.”

The “fundamentals” have become different for various groups of conservatives, but the liberal/fundamentalist controversy polarized the methods by which Christians came to interpret Genesis. The fundamentalist pre-commitment to literalism created the necessary conditions for a widespread acceptance of young-earth creationism. But

that common explanation is only a broad outline to understand why young-earth creationism grew to dominate conservative views of Genesis. There is much more to the story. Dispensational premillennialism set the bulk of conservative, fundamentalist Christians in America onto a collision course with Lyell's old-earth geology.

The Dominant Old-Earth View

The battle between Lyell's geology and Darby's theology did not begin immediately. The Plymouth Brethren, founders of modern dispensational premillennialism, had no qualms over an ancient earth in the 19th century. This irked Henry Morris who wrote:

The smaller fundamentalist churches, such as the so-called Plymouth Brethren and various independent churches, for the most part retreated to the "gap theory," inserting the geological ages in an imaginary gap between the first two verses of Genesis.¹

The reason the 19th-century dispensationalists accepted an ancient earth is simple: the idea of an ancient earth was the dominant if not *universal* belief among Christians at the time, even long before Charles Darwin. Darby's personal friend, Cyrus I. Scofield (1843-1921), later popularized dispensational premillennialism in America with the 1909 publication of his *Scofield Reference Bible*. Scofield's study bible incorporated the gap theory of creation in a note on Genesis 1:

{without form and void} # Jer 4:23-27 Isa 24:1 45:18 clearly indicate that the earth had undergone a cataclysmic change as the result of divine judgment. The face of the earth bears everywhere the marks of such a catastrophe. There are not wanting imitations which connect it with a previous testing and fall of angels. See # Eze 28:12-15 Isa 14:9-14 which certainly go beyond the kings of Tyre and Babylon.²

Christians in the 19th century who did not accept the gap theory generally held to the day-age interpretation of the creation week.* Mark Noll, Wheaton College's McManis Professor of Christian Thought, ref-

* The gap theory and other old-earth creationist views are discussed in Appendix C.

erences this oddity in light of current views of creation held by conservatives:

Despite widespread impressions to the contrary, [young-earth] creationism was not a traditional belief of nineteenth-century conservative Protestants or even of early twentieth-century fundamentalists.³

The widespread popularity of young-earth creationism today conceals the fact that very few believed in a literal six 24-hour-day creation of the universe and a young-earth from some time in the 1700s to a few decades ago. That explains why J. Vernon McGee (1904–1988), the stalwart Bible teacher whose messages beamed from millions of radios across America for much of the 20th century, could state his old-earth views quite plainly:

The first eleven chapters [of Genesis] cover a minimum time spans of two thousand years – actually, two thousand years *plus*. I feel that it is safe to say that they may cover several hundred thousand years. I believe this first section of Genesis can cover any time in the past that you may need to fit into your particular theory, and the chances are that you would come short of it even then.⁴

Who created the universe? God did. He created it out of nothing. When? I don't know, and nobody else knows. Some men say one billion years ago, some say two billion, and now some say five billion. I personally suspect they are all pikers. I think God created it long before that.⁵

Young-earth creationism is a modern development. It took time for the implications of Darby's new prophetic views to work their way back to the book of Genesis. The dominant old-earth creationist views of 18th and 19th-century Christians did not lose their status among Christians overnight.

At the time of the Scopes Trial in 1925 only a handful of Christians in America seriously believed our universe was merely a few thousand years old. William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925), champion of young-earth creationists today, believed our earth and universe was millions, if not billions of years old. He recognized, as countless Christians before him, that the real enemy is atheistic Darwinism, not a conception of the

age of the earth that exceeds 10,000 years. Noll sums up the situation at the time of the Scopes Trial:

Popular opponents of evolution in the 1920s, like William Jennings Bryan, had no difficulty accepting an ancient earth. Bryan, with an acuity that his patronizers rarely perceive, saw clearly that the greatest problem with evolution was not the practice of science but the metaphysical naturalism and consequent social Darwinism that scientific evolution was often called upon to justify.⁶

Gary North, another historian who differs with Noll on many points, concedes that young-earth creationism was intellectually dead at the time of the Scopes Trial. He says:

[Bryan] was not a six-day creationist. Because, in 1922 there weren't any six-day creationists in the Protestant religion. There was only one guy anyone had heard of who held the position and that was a man by the name of George McCready Price.⁷

Bryan's bitter opponent during the Scopes Trial, Clarence Darrow (1857-1938), thought he could capitalize on Bryan's well-known old-earth views. He assaulted Bryan with questions about his understanding of Genesis 1. Bryan responded with his famous statement, "The Rock of Ages is more important than the age of rocks."⁸ He believed the age of the earth to be irrelevant in the debate over evolution. Bryan's statement was not controversial at the time.

The only one who raised the issue of the age of the earth was George McCready Price (1870-1963). Henry Morris claims Price confronted Bryan about his old-earth views before the Scopes Trial. Morris writes:

Probably the most serious mistake made by Bryan on the stand was to insist repeatedly that he had implicit confidence in the infallibility of Scripture, but then to hedge on the geological question, relying on the day/age theory. He had been warned against this very thing by George McCready Price.⁹

Morris goes on to imply that Bryan lost the case in the court of public opinion because of infidelity on this point. But who was George Mc-

Credy Price and why did he defend young-earth creationism against all other conservative Christians in the early 20th century?

The Premillennial Source of Flood Geology

The reason goes all the way back to the Plymouth Brethren and the events of 1830. George McCredy Price emphasized dispensationalism and the imminent pre-tribulational rapture of the Church. As a devout Seventh Day Adventist, Price also promoted Sabbath-keeping, i.e., worshipping on Saturday, the seventh day of the week. The Adventists insisted on a *literal* 24-hour reading of the days of Genesis 1 in order to provide a *theological defense* for their strict Sabbatarian views. This, combined with a global view of the Genesis flood,* led the Adventists to stand against every other Christian denomination with their young-earth creationist views of Genesis.

Adventist doctrine formed around the teachings of their chief prophetess, Ellen G. White (1827-1915), whom they considered to be divinely inspired. Much like Margaret Macdonald a few decades earlier, White had visions or trances where she would receive, ostensibly, God's revelation for the Adventist Church. Many of these trances were directly related to dispensational/premillennial futurism of the sort the Plymouth Brethren introduced. However, White did not merely concern herself with visions of the rapture and second coming of Christ. She also spoke at great length about Genesis.

In one of these revelations, which occurred sometime before 1864, White offers her vision of the flood event:

Before the flood there were immense forests. The trees were many times larger than any trees which we now see... At the time of the flood these forests were torn up or broken down and buried in the earth. In some places large quantities of these immense trees were thrown together and covered with stones and earth by the commotions of the flood. They have since petrified and become coal, which accounts for the large coal beds which are now found. This coal has produced oil.¹⁰

White's conception of the flood event matched her dispensational/premillennial views of prophecy. Noah's flood was a global cataclysmic event comparable to the supposed "imminent" great tribulation:

* We offer an in depth look at the subject of Noah's flood in Chapters 7-10.

The bowels of the earth were the Lord's arsenal, from which he drew forth the weapons he employed in the destruction of the old world... In the day of the Lord, just before the coming of Christ, God will send lightnings from Heaven in his wrath, which will unite with fire in the earth. The mountains will burn like a furnace, and will pour forth terrible streams of lava, destroying gardens and fields, villages and cities... The earth will be convulsed, and there will be dreadful eruptions and earthquakes everywhere. God will plague the wicked inhabitants of the earth until they are destroyed from off it.¹¹

White also suggests that true scientific investigation would reveal the empirical evidence for Noah's flood in geology:

Geology has been thought to contradict the literal interpretation of the Mosaic record of the creation... It is true that remains found in the earth testify to the existence of men, animals, and plants much larger than any now known. These are regarded as proving the existence of vegetable and animal life prior to the time of the Mosaic record. But concerning these things Bible history furnishes ample explanation. Before the Flood the development of vegetable and animal life was immeasurably superior to that which has since been known. At the Flood the surface of the earth was broken up, marked changes took place, and in the re-formation of the earth's crust were preserved many evidences of the life previously existing. The vast forests buried in the earth at the time of the Flood, and since changed to coal, form the extensive coal fields, and yield the supplies of oil that minister to our comfort and convenience today. These things, as they are brought to light, are so many witnesses mutely testifying to the truth of the word of God.¹²

George McCready Price forever put his mark upon the history of the Genesis debate when he set out to provide an academic defense for White's "inspired" visions. Noll explains:

Modern [young-earth] creationism arose, by contrast, from the efforts of earnest Seventh-day Adventists who wanted to show that the sacred writings of Adventist-founder El-

len G. White (who made much of a recent earth and the Noachian deluge) could provide a framework for studying the history of the earth. Especially important for this purpose was the Adventist theorist George McCready Price (1870-1963), who published a string of creationist works culminating in 1923 with *The New Geology*. That book argued that a “simple” or “literal” reading of early Genesis showed that God had created the world six to eight thousand years ago and had used the Flood to construct the planet’s geological past.¹³

Bernard Ramm, a well-known Bible-Science author, had this to say about the situation in America as the 20th century unfolded:

Now we shall pass on to the great revival of flood geology in the twentieth century. This revival was carried on principally by the Seventh-Day Adventist apologists and was termed the new diluvialism or the new catastrophism to distinguish it from the older flood geology of Cuvier and Agassiz [theories of successive floods over the ancient past which explain geological layering]... One of the strangest developments of the early part of the twentieth century was that George McCready Price, a Seventh-Day Adventist with very limited professional training, became American fundamentalism’s leading apologist in the domain of geology. Even this had a most peculiar quirk, because most fundamentalists accepted the gap theory as taught in *The Scofield Bible*, a theory which the Seventh-Day Adventists vigorously reject. At any rate, the influence of Price is staggering.¹⁴

Covering the Tracks

John C. Whitcomb, Jr. and Henry Morris initially attempted to hide the origin of the basic ideas and scientific arguments in their 1961 book, *The Genesis Flood*. They sensed denominational differences between Adventists and other evangelicals might reflect badly upon their view, so they did not want to acknowledge the intellectual source for their thesis. They obscured their source. Author Don Stoner explains:

The connection to Price and the Adventists worried Whitcomb and Morris. Unfortunately their actions reflected

more concern with the outward appearance than with the substance. Fearing that Price's Adventist-tinted reputation might hinder the acceptance of *The Genesis Flood*, Whitcomb and Morris tried to avoid any visible connection with Price. Although they left the substance of their arguments unchanged, they removed nearly every mention of Price's name from their book. This irritated many of Price's friends who felt Whitcomb and Morris had not given him sufficient credit for the intellectual debt they owed him... *The Genesis Flood*, as it has been variously described, is essentially an "updated version" of Price's *New Geology* or a "reissue of G.M. Price's views brought up to date."¹⁵

The basic theory of flood geology found in *The Genesis Flood* ultimately derives from the visions of Ellen G. White. Yet *The Genesis Flood* was presented to Christian conservatives as the first scholarly book on geological catastrophism. It became the foundation for the explosive growth of young-earth creationism since its publication in 1961. Although Price is mentioned a handful of times in the 500-page tome, never – not even once – did Whitcomb and Morris credit Price and the Adventists for the basic ideas of flood geology.

Morris later confessed to the role Price played in his views:

The most important Creationist writer in the first half-century, at least in my judgment, was a remarkable man by the name of George McCready Price (1870-1962).¹⁶

I first encountered his name in one of Harry Rimmer's books... and thereupon looked up his book *The New Geology* in the library at Rice Institute, where I was teaching at the time. This was in early 1943 and it was a life-changing experience for me. I eventually acquired and read most of his other books as well.¹⁷

Several other Adventist creationists published papers in *The Naturalist* and other Adventist publications, as noted in the following chapter. Although the influence of most of them was largely limited to their own denomination, some (especially Price) have contributed quite significantly to the foundations of the modern [young-earth] creationist revival.¹⁸

Twenty-three years *after* the release of *The Genesis Flood* Morris apparently felt that he could reveal the role Price played in his work. By then American evangelicals had swallowed the theory hook, line, and sinker. They had swallowed something else, too: the same dispensational premillennialism at the heart of Adventism (which also undergirds Price and Morris' work) had grown to dominate virtually all of American evangelicalism. The first dispensational mega-seller after *The Scofield Bible* was Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*, published in 1970. This was the same year Morris' "Institute for Creation Research" opened its doors as the "Creation-Science Research Center."

Hugh Ross, a vocal opponent of young-earth creationism, explains the explosive growth of young-earth creationism during this period:

By 1980 nearly every American evangelical church and school had been strongly influenced by the young-universe creationist organizations and teachings... So pervasive has been the influence of such groups that their views on creation are thought to represent the doctrine of the entire community of Bible-believing Christians.¹⁹

Ross' analysis omits any reference to the connection between premillennialism and the young-earth creationist movement. This oversight is understandable given the fact that Ross publicly endorses premillennialism. But there is no doubt that young-earth creationism and premillennialism grew to dominate the American Christian scene simultaneously.

There are a few evangelical leaders whose views are a reverse image of Ross' views. While Ross accepts premillennialism and rejects young-earth creationism, these leaders accept young-earth creationism and reject premillennialism. It is a curious fact that these evangelical leaders never made progress in convincing the vocal proponents of young-earth creationism to publicly renounce their prophetic views.²⁰ Gary North, a noted postmillennial author, vented his frustration:

What has bothered me about the Creation Science movement for almost two decades is that its leaders will not admit that they have mixed together a particular view of eschatology that has nothing to do with the categories or content of physical science. They refuse to tell their followers, "This part of the essay is based on premillennial-

ism, and the empirically verifiable facts of physical science don't have anything to do with it."²¹

North tenaciously defends young-earth creationism, but objects to the prophetic views held by all the leading young-earth authors. What North and other anti-dispensationalists do not seem to consider is the possibility that dispensational premillennialism lies at the very heart of modern young-earth creationism. This lapse seems strange considering the fact that North fully understands who made *The Genesis Flood* a blockbuster success. Speaking of Whitcomb and Morris' famous book, he notes:

Moody Press turned down the manuscript because [*The Genesis Flood*] was hostile to age-day creationism. They said we won't publish it... Boy was Charles Craig happy. He was my publisher, too. Was he happy. First best-seller he ever had. He was now selling to Baptists. Who boy, there's money!²²

These were the same Baptists who had become dominated totally by dispensational premillennialism. That is why they loved *The Genesis Flood*.

Premillennialism Applied to Genesis

For George McCready Price, the issue was not only about a literal 24-hour reading of the creation days to justify Sabbatarianism. The issue in Genesis was much larger. His work on Genesis was interwoven with his own prophetic views. What he attempted with flood geology (what we now call young-earth creationism) was a self-conscious application of his dispensational premillennial beliefs *back to Genesis*. In 1922, before premillennialism rose to absolute dominance among American evangelicals, Price wrote:

The most timely truth for our day is a reform which will point this generation of evolutionists back to Creation, and to the worship of Him who made the heaven and earth. Other reforms in other days have been based upon various parts of the Bible here and there. The reform most needed in our day is one based on the first part of the Bible — and upon the last part also. For he who is looking for the return of his Lord, and for the imminent ushering in of the new heaven and earth, must necessarily believe in the record of

the first part of the Bible which tells of the Creation of the earth. Surely it is useless to expect people to believe in the predictions given in the last chapters of the Bible, if they do not believe in the record of the events described in its first chapters.²³

Price probably never foresaw the smashing success his views would become in modern America. Today, conservatives generally accept his views of Genesis as well as his views of end-times prophecy. But what his statement makes clear is that *everything* in the Genesis debate goes back, one way or another, to 1830. Price consciously worked out the dispensational premillennial implications for Genesis.

When Lyell published his *Geology* there was virtually no Christian opposition to an ancient earth. Vocal Christians were some of the most eminent geologists of the day. As dispensational premillennialism grew in popularity and influence, it gradually developed a new approach to Genesis. Victory for the Plymouth Brethren's dispensational premillennialism meant that Lyell and the earlier geologists would inevitably become demonized as apostate. This is what the success of Darby's theology meant for the Genesis debate:

[M]ost flood geologists (in America at least) came from churches awaiting Christ's soon return to earth. And for Christians expecting the imminent end of the present age — whether premillennial Baptists and Adventists or amillennial Lutherans and Church of Christ members — Whitcomb and Morris offered a compelling view of earth history framed by symmetrical catastrophic events and connected by a common hermeneutic. "If you take Genesis literally," reasoned Morris, "you're more inclined to take Revelation literally."²⁴

Even atheistic evolutionists understand how modern young-earth creationism is a *function* of premillennial futurism. Michael Ruse, the popular Darwinist proponent from Harvard, writes:

For [George McCready] Price, this worldview was all bound up with the premillennialism of the Adventists. The flood at the beginning corresponds to the forthcoming Great Tribulation at the end.²⁵

The same could be said about the overwhelming majority of American Christian conservatives during the last few decades.

Premillennial Philosophy of History

Premillennialism also provided another motivation to reject modern geology and science. We believe the compelling reason why Whitcomb and Morris embraced Price's flood geology is rooted in their literalism, prophetic views, *and over-arching philosophy of history*. They viewed modern geology as anti-biblical because they saw "evil" uniformitarianism* as *proof* of the arrival of the "last days" of planet Earth.

What biblical basis did they cite? Morris taught that 2 Peter 3 refers to cultural conditions made possible only by the rise of modern geology. He drew a link between Lyell's uniformitarianism and what Peter predicted regarding the last days scoffers described in 2 Peter 3:

The basis of this scoffing rejection of God's Word is their commitment to evolutionism. Since "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation," they will say, therefore, "creation" is still being accomplished by these natural processes that "continue" in the present just as they have throughout the past... *This prophecy [2 Peter 3:3-4] began to be fulfilled with the rise of the Lyell/Darwin evolutionary worldview in the mid-nineteenth century [emphasis ours]...*²⁶

Morris, like Price and White before him, viewed modern scientific developments through his premillennial view of culture and society. From his prophetic viewpoint, modern science and culture are *predestined* to degenerate into apostasy during the "last days" before the rapture and second coming of Christ. Morris believed he lived in the last days and so he anticipated a great worldwide apostasy. Lyell's geological uniformitarianism fit the bill for Morris' view of Peter's prophecy.

American Christianity was not far behind. His message clicked with American audiences precisely because they shared his prophetic outlook and, therefore, his pessimism. J. Vernon McGee, the famous radio preacher, held to the common old-earth view for decades during his early radio career.²⁷ He even openly mocked the suggestion that the date of creation was around 4000 BC:

* Uniformitarianism is the view that the processes we observe today in nature are similar to the processes that have always occurred.

In our day there is so much misinformation in the minds of intelligent human beings. For example, before me is a clipping from a secular magazine from several years ago. It posed a question, then answered it. First, the question: "What, according to biblical records, is the date of the creation of the world?" Now listen to the answer that was given: "4004 B.C." How utterly ridiculous can one be?²⁸

But later in his career McGee came around to preach Morris' view:

The Genesis Flood not only answers the question of its being a universal flood rather than a local flood, but it also answers this question of uniformitarianism... I am not going into detail, except to point out that Peter makes it very clear that we should expect such scoffers. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Peter 3:3-4). The scoffer has always been a uniformitarian, but you could not very well hold that position and accept the integrity of the Word of God at this particular point. This is very important to see.²⁹

Millions of conservative Christians in America heard this on their radio from the beloved J. Vernon McGee. McGee's book referenced above is a compilation of edited transcripts drawn from his radio sermons. This little book, which likely stretches over decades of McGee's preaching, is perhaps the finest demonstration of the total shift away from the dominant old-earth creationism once held in common by conservative Christians. This transformation in conservative Christian views of creation and science has taken place since the release of *The Genesis Flood* in 1961. McGee's 200 page book promotes the gap theory of creation across its pages. At the same time, McGee lauds the newly released book by Whitcomb & Morris:

What is the scientific, historical evidence for the Flood? I am not going to enter into this subject other than to mention one of the finest books on this subject which I can highly recommend. It is *The Genesis Flood* by Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb... I assume there is an abundance of historical evidence for the Flood, and it is

not necessary for me to go into it, as it has been answered in this very scholarly book.³⁰

Consider the profound confusion. McGee expounded his gap theory view (which accepted Lyell's geology and the old-earth time frame) and endorsed the new flood geology (which defined the geological column in terms of Noah's Flood and demands a recent creation) simultaneously. This chaos can be explained only by a rolling paradigm shift in the second half of the 20th century. McGee's old-earth views as a young Bible preacher eroded when the implications of premillennial futurism began to be applied back to Genesis. What McGee found compelling in Whitcomb and Morris' work was their shared *premillennial philosophy* (expressed in their common understanding of 2 Peter 3) *worked back into history*. Young-earth creationism's negative view of modern science is largely an *effect* of premillennial pessimism about the last days. Their analysis of modern old-earth science as "apostate" and "anti-Christ" fits with their cultural worldview.

The connection between young-earth creationism and futurist prophetic interpretation is not a coincidental agreement in the overall outline of premillennial futurism. It is not merely chance compatibility between Baptists and Adventists as fundamentalist allies. The connection is deeply rooted in the absolute dedication to a particular method of biblical interpretation, prophetic viewpoint, and philosophy of history. We think Noll is on the right track, but still only sees the tip of the issue when he writes:

A biblical literalism, gaining strength since the 1870s, has fueled both the intense concern for human origins and the end times. Literal readings of Genesis 1-3 find their counterpart in literal readings of Revelation 20 (with its description of the thousand-year reign of Christ).³¹

There may be even more to connect the earlier spread of dispensationalism with the later popularity of creation science. Creationism could, in fact, be called scientific dispensationalism, for creation scientists carry the same attitude toward catastrophe and the sharp break between eras into their science that dispensationalists see in the Scriptures.³²

Dispensationalism eventually developed into a complete worldview in which modern young-earth creationism became a key component.

Premillennialism and Young-Earth Creationism

Morris wrote about his own futurist views in a 1983 book titled *The Revelation Record*. The real accomplishment along these lines, though, is when Morris *combined* his views on Genesis and prophecy in a remarkable 1991 book titled *Creation and the Second Coming*.³³ The theme of that book can be found on the opening page of the foreword:

Why would a renowned creation scientist write a book on prophecy? The answer is that, while most such books focus solely on the future events, this one fits the future into God's program for original creation.³⁴

A few pages later Morris gave his testimony as a long-time, devoted dispensational premillennialist:

The signs have been increasing in clarity for many years now. I remember my grandmother quoting an evangelist she had heard talking about Mussolini and other supposed signs of that day, predicting that Christ would return in 1933. When the atomic bomb exploded in Japan in 1945, even though I knew better than to set dates for Christ's coming, I was certain His return was so near that I almost decided not to go to graduate school. I have kept a plaque reading PERHAPS TODAY! on my office wall for almost 50 years now, and have noted that the signs which seemed so obvious 50 years ago have continued to grow in intensity with each passing year. Surely the Lord is coming soon!³⁵

No doubt, many old-earth creationists wish Morris had acted consistently with his premillennial beliefs by dropping his educational pursuits. But here is where the issues we covered in Chapters 1 through 4 of this book are crucial. Speaking of Matthew 24:34-35, Morris writes:

In this striking prophecy, the words "this generation" has the emphasis of "*that* generation." That is, that generation — the one that sees the specific signs of His coming — will not completely pass away until He has returned to reign as King.

Now if the first sign was, as we have surmised, the first World War, then followed by all His other signs, His coming must indeed be very near — even at the doors! There are only a few people still living from that generation. I myself was born just a month before the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918. Those who were old enough really to know about that first World War — “the beginning of sorrows” — would be at least in their eighties now. Thus, although we cannot be dogmatic, we could very well now be living in the very last days before the return of our Lord!³⁶

Morris is now dead having attained the ripe old age of 87. His system lives on in large measure because of the power futurism wields over American evangelicals. But how much longer can this generation hold out?

The Contemporary Dilemma

Others have argued against young-earth creationism from different angles to mixed success. Given this historical overview it is not hard to understand why young-earth creationism seems impervious to criticism from old-earth Christians. The reign of young-earth creationism is inescapably tied to the reign of futurism among American Christians. This truth could be stated just as accurately in reverse. The reign of futurism is tied to the reign of young-earth creationism. Consider this remarkable statement:

Eschatologies, in other words, implicate their holders in a wide range of stances, including views of human origins. Perhaps the statement would be just as true if it were reversed.³⁷

Old-earth creationists often wonder what it will take to bring about the demise of young-earth creationism which they believe, scientifically speaking, is no stronger than the proverbial house of cards. Nevertheless, its popularity remains astonishingly high among American evangelicals. Conservative Christians who dare to question young-earth creationism are commonly accused of evolutionary compromise, liberalism, humanism, unbelief, and even apostasy. Old-earth creationists ask themselves why young-earth creationism seems bullet-proof in the face of seemingly overwhelming physical evidence. Could the answer be that futurism predisposes Christians to young-earth creationism?

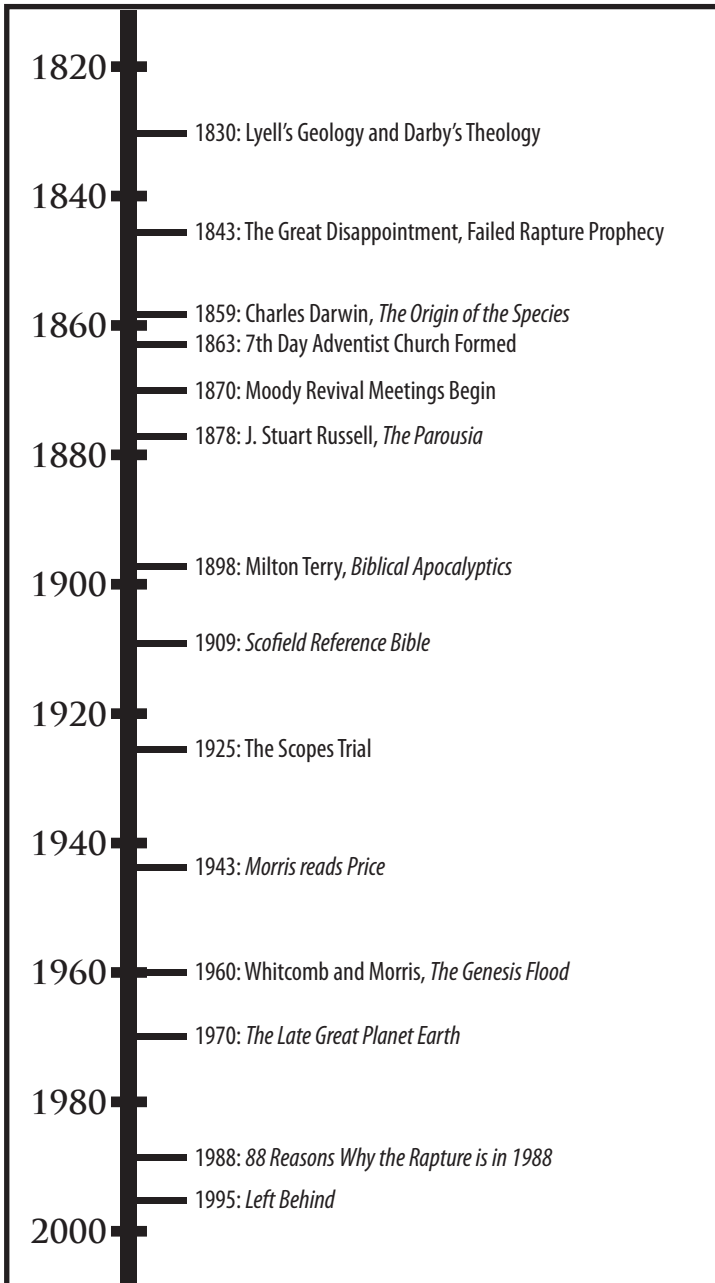
There is also a small but growing group of conservative evangelicals who believe New Testament prophecy is focused on first-century events in Rome and Judea. They also wonder what it will take to bring about the demise of dispensational premillennialism in America which has retreated from reasoned biblical defense of the view. These “preterists” note how futurism’s popular defense and exposition has been reduced to the publication of a sprawling set of popular novels.

Preterists lament how Christians endure failed prophecy after failed prophecy. Futurists seem to never grow weary of speculating about the identity of the antichrist pasted (for the time being) upon the newest boogeyman in the headlines. Preterists ask why modern futurism seems bullet-proof in the face of any rational evaluation. Could the answer be that young-earth creationism predisposes Christians toward futurism? Or could it be that a wooden literalism, based on a modern understanding of the world, predisposes Christians to both young-earth creationism in Genesis and dispensationalism in prophecy?

The following pages of this book represent a multi-faceted investigation into these questions. This book is a comprehensive critique of young-earth creationism. As such it will include a dimension we have never seen incorporated as an argument against young-earth creationism. Our presentation will center on what we believe to be the central error of young-earth creationism – futurism.

We will argue against the three pillars of modern young-earth creationism from the perspective of a preterist view of New Testament prophecy. We believe that preterism offers a refutation of: (1) the belief that the Genesis flood was global; (2) the belief that no biological death existed before the fall; and (3) the belief that Genesis 1 is a literal record of God’s creation of the physical universe over six 24-hour days.

Our goal is to convince you that *any* critique of modern young-earth creationism that assumes prophetic futurism will be ineffective over the long run. In like manner, *any* critique of modern futurism that assumes young-earth creationism will also be just as ineffective. Only a holistic approach to the Bible from Genesis to Revelation can provide a coherent alternative to the popularity of young-earth creationism on one side of the Bible and dispensational premillennialism on the other. In the end, they will stand or fall together.

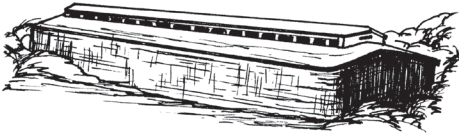


CHAPTER 7

THE GREAT FLOOD DEBATE

The Logic of Flood Geology

There is no question that the modern young-earth creationist movement we know today stands or falls on flood geology. The strategy is not difficult to understand. The claim is that Genesis teaches a global flood occurred in the days of Noah. This global flood is the source for all the geological evidence in the geological record.



It is important to understand that the global-flood doctrine is logically related to young-earth creationism's interpretation of the fall. Flood geologists claim the fossil record *cannot* document an ancient past because biological death is a *result* of Adam's fall.¹ They claim the Bible teaches that there was no biological death before the fall. In other words, all of the death documented in the fossil record took place *after* Adam's sin rather than *before* the creation and fall of Adam. *An ancient fossil record would not only undermine flood geology, it would also contradict young-earth creationism's physical interpretation of the fall in Genesis 3.**

The ultimate conclusion of flood geology is that the passing of millions of years of time, which traditional geologists see, never really happened. Flood geologists hold that all geological evidence is the result of one global event in our recent past. Or to put it differently, flood geology holds that modern geology has rejected what the Bible plainly teaches about the global flood and, as a result, has made a terrible mistake in viewing the earth as millions or billions of years old.

* We will examine young-earth creationism's claim that the Bible teaches no biological death existed before the fall in Chapter 12.

Since Darwin's theory of biological evolution is constructed on top of Lyell's old-earth geology, flood geology ostensibly refutes Darwin at a fundamental point; a young earth leaves Darwin no time for his theory of evolution.* The end goal of the entire enterprise is to refute Lyell and pull the scientific carpet out from under Darwin's biological evolution.

There is a great deal more to flood geology than this, but, theoretically speaking, the logic makes some sense. Christians did not find themselves on the winning side of the cultural war against Darwinian atheism during the 20th century. Many were desperate in the face of the Darwinist juggernaut in American thought and culture. This led to a comprehensive retreat from modern culture. Millions of premillennial Christians escaped into the hope of an imminent rapture and second coming. They abandoned the scientific disciplines (and other realms of culture) as bastions of unbelief and apostasy so characteristic of the predicted "last days."

One of the reasons flood geology became attractive was the ease with which it could be communicated to popular audiences who saw geology in the flood account. The fundamentalist reaction to the naturalistic claims of liberalism increased the appeal because of the growing emphasis on the "literal" interpretation of the Bible. Fundamentalists sought to highlight the miraculous in Scripture, and there are few things more miraculous than a worldwide flood in Noah's day.

Young-earth creationism presented its view of earth's history as the plain teaching of Scripture on origins and the flood. The ultimate victory of Darby's prophetic views made flood geology irresistible on biblical grounds because, as we will see, the flood is explicitly compared to events in New Testament prophecy.

Why a Global Flood is a Modern View

The one strange thing about flood geology is that those who embrace it today uniformly believe Christians have always understood the Genesis flood exactly as they do: a universal, worldwide catastrophe. Most advocates of flood geology are shocked to hear anyone claim that a local flood is the ancient view. Consider what Josephus had to say about the flood nearly 2000 years ago:

* At the same time, young-earth creationism teaches that evolution occurred extremely fast after the flood. We will investigate the necessity of hyper-evolution in the young-earth system in Chapter 11.

Now all the writers of barbarian [Greek] histories make mention of this flood and of this ark: among whom is Berosus the Chaldean... Hieronymous the Egyptian.... Nicolaus of Damascus, in his ninety-sixth book, hath a particular relation about them, where he speaks thus: "There is a great mountain in Armenia, over Minyas, called Baris, upon which it is reported *that many who fled at the time of the Deluge were saved*; and that *one who was carried in an ark came on shore upon top of it*; and that the remains of the timber were a great while preserved. This might be the man about whom Moses, the legislator of the Jews wrote" [emphasis ours].²

You would think that if Josephus believed the flood to be absolutely universal, involving all human beings and all planet Earth, he would not quote the ancient historian Nicolaus.

Josephus does not correct Nicolaus' account. He quotes him approvingly, and accepts his statement that some inhabitants at the very edge of the flood escaped to the top of a great mountain. He even includes an eyewitness account of the ark landing from Nicolaus' history. There is no way to reconcile this passage in Josephus with a global flood view.

Josephus' citation from Nicolaus does contain a bit of speculation about "reports" of what happened and that this "might" be the man we call Noah. Josephus goes on to indicate that he did, in fact, believe in a local flood. He gives this explanation:

Now the sons of Noah were three – Shem, Japhet, and Ham, born one hundred years before the Deluge. These first of all descended from the mountains into the plains, and fixed their habitation there; *and persuaded others who were greatly afraid of the lower grounds on account of the flood*, and so were very loath to come down from the higher places, to venture to follow their examples [emphasis ours].³

Here, Josephus shows that others witnessed the flood besides Noah's family. In fact, it is Noah's family who has to "persuade" the others to return to the plain because of the fear of what just happened. Josephus did not believe Noah's family were the only people remaining on planet Earth after the flood.

Josephus mentions another detail that presents grave difficulties for a global flood:

Hereby Noah learned that the earth was become clear of the flood. So after he had stayed seven more days he sent the living creatures out of the ark; and both he and his family went out, when he also sacrificed to God, and feasted with his companions. However the Armenians call this place *The Place of Descent*; for the ark being saved in that place, its remains are shewn there by the inhabitants to this day.⁴

Notice how Josephus explains the position of the ark's resting place is both known and accessible in his day. Global flood advocates often present the ark as perched high on top of Mt. Ararat some fifteen thousand feet above current sea level. To say the ark is inaccessible is an understatement. Many speak hopefully of finding the ark soon under the glacial ice cap high on the mountain.⁵

Josephus, on the other hand, explains that the resting place was easily accessible – the locals show off the remnants. A few sentences down in his text from the above citation, Josephus quotes the Chaldean historian Berosus who writes “some people carry off pieces of the bitumen, which they take away, and use chiefly as amulets for the averting of mischiefs.”⁶ This is quite a different view than global flood advocates present.⁷

Josephus' conception of the flood is important because he is a first century Jew who lived contemporary to the time of the writing of the New Testament. He gives us a glimpse into the accepted view of the flood in his day. Josephus' understanding of the flood is likely the common understanding among many if not all of the early Jewish Christians. The early Church fathers relied heavily upon Josephus' history. Though they did not concern themselves with the issue of the scope of the flood, nothing they said about it contradicts Josephus' account.

We should add one caveat here. These quotations from Josephus do not prove the *Bible* teaches a local flood. They do prove a local-flood view goes back to ancient times. We do not generally assume that respected historians are wrong, but sometimes they are. The key point is that a local view of the flood is nothing new. The idea that people have *always* read Genesis as teaching a global flood is simply not true.

“Antipodes” and the Spherical Earth

A second item to consider is that the modern global-flood view we know today would be *impossible* for the ancients to grasp. How can global-flood advocates seriously believe that Christians have always taught a global flood, involving all the continents and people around the globe, *before* Christians even recognized the size, scope, and nature of our planet Earth?

To illustrate the anachronistic problem, consider the debate in the early Church over the spherical earth and the existence of “antipodes.” The debate over the antipodes centered around whether or not the earth was peopled on the opposite side of the planet. These theoretical people were called “antipodes” because their footsteps would appear opposite to the ancients. Of course, the ancients did not think of themselves as on one side of planet Earth; they thought of their location as on the “top” of the world because heaven was spatially “up there” and hell was “down below.” They oriented themselves according to those beliefs, not as we do in terms of latitude and longitude coordinates.

Those who argued against the existence of the antipodes in this debate imagined them as having feet coming out of their heads so that they could stand upside down. This was quite a concern for some early Christian teachers. Lactantius (260-330) writes:

How is it with those who imagine that there are antipodes opposite to our footsteps? Do they say anything to the purpose? Or is there any one so senseless as to believe that there are men whose footsteps are higher than their heads? Or that the things which with us are in a recumbent position, with them hang in an inverted direction? That the crops and trees grow downwards? That the rains, and snow, and hail fall upwards to the earth? And does anyone wonder what hanging gardens are mentioned among the seven wonders of the world, when philosophers make hanging fields, and seas, and cities, and mountains?... I should be able to prove by many arguments that it is impossible for the heaven to be lower than the earth, were it not that this book must now be concluded...⁸

Lactantius is hardly working from a global conception of the world that we take for granted. This issue of the antipodes, even the spherical

nature of the earth, was no small matter for the early church to accept. Even Augustine (354-430) weighed in on the contested issue:

But as to the fable that there are Antipodes, that is to say, men on the opposite side of the earth, where the sun rises when it sets to us, men who walk with their feet opposite ours, that is on no ground credible. And, indeed, it is not affirmed that this has been learned by historical knowledge, but by scientific conjecture, on the ground that the earth is suspended within the concavity of the sky, and that it has as much room on the one side of it as on the other; hence they say that the part which is beneath must be inhabited. But they do not remark that, although it be supposed or scientifically demonstrated that the world is of a round or spherical form, yet it does not follow that the other side of the earth is bare of water; nor even, though it be bare, does it immediately follow that it is peopled. For Scripture, which proves the truth of its historical statements by the accomplishment of its prophecies, gives no false information...⁹

Augustine assumed that because Scripture does not mention the existence of men on the other side of the earth that they simply do not exist. Given this context, is it conceivable that Augustine could possibly think of the Genesis flood in the same way as modern global-flood proponents? We will discuss Augustine's views of creation more in the following chapters, but notice his concept of the world. Augustine cannot accept that other continents inhabited by people even exist! How in the world could Augustine and the Christians of his day possibly think of the Genesis flood just as modern global-flood advocates do today?

Our modern view of planet Earth with its distinct continents and varied oceans is forever shaped by the accomplishments of Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) and the age of discovery he pioneered. Contrary to popular opinion, Columbus did not sail to prove the earth is round — that fact was commonly accepted in his day. His critics claimed the earth was too large to make it to the Indies in one voyage. They were actually right. The only thing that saved Columbus was what we call the Americas which lay between Europe and Asia. Columbus unintentionally settled the ancient and medieval debate over the existence of the antipodes *by empirical discovery*. He, along with the other explorers of his day, proved the existence of what the ancients thought could not ex-

ist. The natives turned out to be friendly in some cases and dangerous in others.

This is a good example of how theology interacts inevitably with scientific progress. We could add the well-known debacle of the geocentrism debate in the days of Copernicus as another example.* Science and theology interact – whether Christians like it or not. There has never been a time in Church history where this interaction did not take place. The point not to miss is that, until well after Columbus, the common conception of a global flood involving all continents and all planet Earth, as we think of it, was simply not possible.

Modern Christians in the Genesis debate tend to be chronocentric; they get stuck in their own time period and cultural mindset. What is taken as the common sense understanding about the essential nature and geography of our planet today was hardly common sense for Christians before AD 1500. What is thought of as the plain and obvious interpretation of a global flood with all of its implications for worldwide geology is only plain and obvious to the *modern* mindset. It is modern science and modern geology that has spawned the flood geology of young-earth creationism. The doctrine of a global flood is what is new in Church history. The local-flood view of Josephus predates it by millennia.

We should add a second caveat here. This historical overview, as important as it is when misconceptions abound in our day, cannot determine the proper biblical interpretation of the scope of the flood. Biblical interpretations may take centuries to develop fully. This history is worthy to be considered in order to set the record straight, but the big question is what *Genesis* teaches about the flood. Will an unbiased look at the account prove that a global flood happened precisely as flood geologists claim? Or does the Bible give internal evidence that the flood was local?

The Biblical Context of the Flood

Most Christians believe that the flood account appears in Genesis 6-9. This is an unfortunate mistake, an effect of chapter breaks in the modern Bible. Genesis 5 sets the *context* of the flood by saying:

When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth. After

* We will talk more about the geocentrism debate in Chapter 19.

Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters... When Seth had lived 105 years, he became the father of Enosh... (Gen. 5:3-4, 6 NIV)

Genesis 5 *narrows* the subject in the Genesis account from all the children of Adam to the *line of Seth*. That sets the immediate context for what takes place in chapters 6 through 9. In other words, Genesis 5 sets a *covenant context* for all the events to follow in the flood account. If we ignore the chapter break and read this as one continuous story, the flood is related to *the covenant line of the progeny of Seth*. Global flood advocates generally ignore this context to the flood account in the same way that many ignore the time statements in the New Testament which set the covenant context for prophecy.

One global flood advocate notes how the context of Genesis 5 relates to the falling away of the *covenant* line of Seth. Author James Jordan writes:

It seems, though, that the godly line of Seth fell away. Three generations later, only Noah was left to find favor in God's sight.¹⁰

Jordan's statement hints that the flood relates to a limited *covenant* context rather than a universal context. If it is the godly line of Seth which fell away, then it is the ungodly within the covenant line of Seth who were destroyed, save righteous Noah! Why would God need to destroy all human beings on planet Earth if it was the godly line of Seth that fell away?

J. Vernon McGee, the renowned dispensationalist Bible teacher, did not accept a local flood, but did recognize this specific context in Genesis 5 that is crucial to the flood story that follows in Genesis 6:

In [Genesis] chapter 5 we have the book of the generations of Adam through Seth. Cain's line has been given to us and is now dropped. It will be mentioned again only as it crosses the godly line.¹¹

This relationship between the flood account and the genealogy of Seth has also been pointed out by author John Sailhamer. He notes how the genealogy of Seth *envelopes* the entire flood account:

The genealogical list in chapter 5 has been purposefully re-structured at its conclusion in order to accommodate the Flood narrative. The Flood narrative has been inserted into

the genealogy between the notation of the total length of Noah's age at the time he engendered his three sons [5:32] and the notation of his total length of his life (9:28) and his death (9:29).¹²

Josephus demonstrates his understanding of Seth's line as the immediate context of the flood event. He opens his history of the flood by saying:

Now this posterity of Seth continued to esteem God as Lord of the Universe, and to have an entire regard to virtue, for seven generations; but in the process of time they were perverted, and forsook the practices of their forefathers, and did neither pay those honours to God which were appointed them, nor had they any concern to do justice toward men... [emphasis ours]¹³

That explains why Josephus did not believe in a global flood. Genesis makes it clear that the flood account relates to the line of Seth, God's covenant people. Josephus parallels this understanding of the story as well. If we pay attention to that context and read Genesis 5 as part of the story we find in Genesis 6 through 9, there is no reason to believe Genesis teaches a worldwide deluge which killed all human beings on planet Earth with the exception of Noah and his family. This is a *covenant* story in *covenant* history. Noah and his family are the only survivors among God's covenant people, i.e., Seth's lineage. God wiped out the entire *covenant* "world" – the progeny of Seth. Only Noah and his family were saved from God's *covenant* judgment.

Local Flood Indicators

You might find this explanation to be quite different from the popular global view. Regardless of our particular introduction to the debate over the flood, there have been many traditional objections raised against a global reading based on "local indicators" found within the text of Genesis.

Notice the curious statement we find early in Genesis 6:

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown. (Gen. 6:4 NIV)

If the Nephilim refer to some specific group of people separate from Noah's family, who lived both before and after the flood, then we have a real problem for a global flood at the outset. This problem becomes more difficult to overlook when it is pointed out that the Nephilim come up later in Numbers:

We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them. (Num. 13:33 NIV)

There is some debate about exactly who and/or what the Nephilim were in the Bible, so it is unwise to be dogmatic. We will just point out that if the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim and the Nephilim were distinct from Noah at the time of the flood (as it appears in Genesis 6:4), then the flood could not have been a global event that wiped out all human beings on planet Earth except Noah and his family. Here is the first internal biblical evidence that Genesis teaches a local flood.

A similar argument for a local flood comes from specific economic details mentioned in the early chapters of Genesis. Genesis says that Cain farmed and Abel herded sheep (Gen. 4:2). This is called division of labor. Division of labor leads to specialization and increased productivity for everyone involved. This specialization ultimately fuels the invention and refinement of new technologies.

A modern explanation of this principle is economist Leonard Read's famous essay, "I, Pencil."¹⁴ Read wrote his essay in order to demonstrate the power of specialization. Read pointed out that, ultimately, no single person knows how to make a pencil available at any local store. One person produces the wood. Another cuts and prepares the wood. Several specialists are involved at each stage of the graphite production. The same can be said for the eraser, the bit of metal that attaches the eraser to the pencil, and the paint, as well as the final assembly and packaging. Not one of these specialists needs to know how any other does his job. Most of them know only their part. No one knows every detailed step. Yet pencils are made so efficiently today that they sell in bulk for less than a dime each.

Now with that in mind, consider what Genesis says about the development of key ancient technology:

Then Lamech took for himself two wives: the name of one *was* Adah, and the name of the second *was* Zillah. And Adah bore Jabal. He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother's name *was* Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute. And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron. (Gen. 4:19-22 NKJV)

Notice that Cain's descendants – Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-Cain – were the fathers of several new technologies. This required specialization on their part. It required specialization of those who provided the raw materials. It required specialization of those who bought and used the products of these new technologies. Genesis says these technologies developed long before the flood.

Here is a real problem for a global-flood view. Eight people on the ark are not enough to maintain these technologies along with the technologies that supported them and carry them all into the post-flood world. Eight people are not enough to develop these technologies anew after the flood. With only eight people, these specialties would have been lost at the time of the flood. They would then have needed to be re-invented when the population recovered. If that had been what happened, then the re-inventors would have been remembered as the fathers of these technologies and Cain's descendants would have been forgotten. The author of Genesis works from the assumption that musical instruments, metallurgy, etc. *existed continuously from before the flood to his present day*. The economics of the situation implies that at least some of Cain's line lived beyond the confines of the event. God judged a covenant world, the line of Seth, for their apostasy. This explains why there is no break in previously developed civilized technology at the time of the flood event. Basic economics points to a local flood.

Another curious element in the flood account is found in Genesis 7:

The waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains were covered. (Gen. 7:20 NKJV)

It is impossible to know the exact length of a biblical cubit, but no one suggests that 15 cubits could be more than 20 to 30 feet. Does it seem natural that a flood of only 20 or 30 feet could be a global event?

This question about the depth of the flood is relevant because the word for "mountains" in Hebrew is *har*.¹⁵ It is often translated merely as "hills." It has no inherent connotation of snow-covered peaks. Au-

thor David Snoke explains the problem that Genesis 7:20 presents for a global flood view:

The passage says that the water rose only twenty feet, not six miles. For no reason other than to make sure there would be enough water for a global flood, this verse is frequently altered to “the water rose to twenty feet higher than the highest mountains.” This latter reading is *not* the “literal” reading; it is interpolated, that is, read in to the text.¹⁶

Genesis 7:20 is a local indicator. Anyone who takes it *literally* must logically argue for a global flood that measured only 20 or 30 feet deep.¹⁷

Starting in 1969, several new English translations mark a shift in translation of this passage which brings Genesis 7:20 in line with global-flood doctrine. For example, the NIV says,

The waters rose *and covered the mountains* to a depth of more than twenty feet. (Gen. 7:20 NIV)

Which it follows with the note:

Or rose more than twenty feet, and the mountains were covered. (NIV note on Gen. 7:20)

Could it be that the meteoric rise of young-earth creationism and global-flood doctrine since the 1961 publication of Whitcomb and Morris' *The Genesis Flood* altered modern Bible translation?¹⁸ This example raises the question as to what else in modern translations might be biased as a natural result of the prevalence of global-flood beliefs.

Another local indicator has to do with the appearance of the olive leaf immediately after the floodwaters subside:

Then the dove came to him in the evening, and behold, a freshly plucked olive leaf was in her mouth. (Gen. 8:11 NKJV)

Olive trees are slow growing trees and do not grow from seed in a few days time. They are also notoriously sensitive to wet environments and only grow in arid climates. A global-flood interpretation implies that the olive tree grew from a seed in a few days or survived a flood thousands of feet deep. A seed would be destroyed by a year's soaking in brine. A tree would have drowned or suffocated in a few days. Either

of these options *adds* a miracle not mentioned in Scripture. But a local-flood interpretation can explain how an olive tree survived in order to provide a sign for Noah after the floodwaters subsided.

This takes us to another local indicator. Notice what Genesis *literally* says:

And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, that the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and indeed the surface of the ground was dry. And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, *the earth was dried*. (Gen. 8:13-14 NKJV)

If the subject of the account is planet Earth, then does this text not teach that the oceans dried up at the end of the flood? Did the entire globe become dry? The plain statement of the text makes much more sense if it refers to a *particular local place* or “the land” where Noah lived.¹⁹

If we use our imaginations to visualize the events of a global flood, many logical problems would come to mind. These are some of the most obvious:

1. If the Genesis flood created the geologic column and radically reshaped the topography of the earth, why do we still have the same rivers in Mesopotamia that Genesis references? The Tigris and Euphrates have been known by those names since millennia before Christ. Would not a global flood, which lays down thousands of feet of strata around the world, obliterate those rivers we see referenced earlier in Genesis?
2. Why would the ark land in the same part of the world after drifting on a worldwide ocean for many months? Noah appeared to find his world *familiar* after he landed. He certainly knew how to grow grapes after the flood. A local flood explains why the ark landed in the same part of the world Noah originally lived, i.e., somewhere in the Middle East.
3. How could one flood event sort out unique fossils to specific layers of strata? A worldwide flood which created the fossil record all at once would leave a chaotic mix of fossils throughout the entire geological column. Outside of a few geological “hotspots,” geologists find

specific fossils in each layer of strata. Would one chaotic flood event place fossils neatly in order?²⁰

4. How could Noah fit all the species of animals from around the world into such a limited ark? Realize that he would also have to take the specific foods unique to each animal in amounts that would have to last the entire voyage. The hay required to feed one pair of elephants would have filled the entire ark. Noah would also have to take water for after the rain stopped, at least. He could not use the waters of the flood for drinking because it would be contaminated and briny. Consider what the water would be like with all of the violent churning/eroding action and death flood geologists maintain took place during the flood.
5. If the fossil record is a *result* of the flood, then it means that the number of animals alive in Noah's day were vastly *more* than today. Noah was commanded to take a pair of *every* animal on board, which means a pair of all the animals documented in the fossil record (which are now extinct) *on top of* all the animals we are familiar with today! They would need food and water for these as well, dinosaurs and all.
6. This logically means that most of the species of animals that God originally created and Noah put on the ark went extinct after the flood. There is a tremendous amount of life documented in the fossil record which is not alive today. More than 95% of the animals that have lived on earth are now extinct. Why would God order Noah to preserve all the animals by bringing them on to the ark and then cause their extinction shortly after the flood? For example, did Noah take dinosaurs (whether eggs or mature) onto the ark only to have them all go extinct?²¹ If so, then the explicit reason given for the ark was nearly a complete failure. Only a tiny percentage of the animals really survived. No wonder Noah took up drinking!

There are lots of reasons, both biblical and logical, why Christians have questioned a global flood interpretation.²² Yet, without a global flood interpretation, flood geology evaporates.

Natural vs. Supernatural

A local flood solves all of these thorny biblical and logical problems that belief in a global flood creates. More Christians, who actually think

through all these details, would accept a local flood except for their understanding of what the text of Genesis says. They reason that since the flood is a miraculous event, by definition, a global flood should not be ruled out merely because it does not fit a naturalistic explanation. James Jordan gives a representative example when he writes:

A few moments' meditation will show just how extraordinary it was. First, it involved a miracle for all the animals to come to Noah and enter the Ark.... Second, it involved a miracle for these animals to be at peace with one another... Third, feeding and caring for these animals involved some kind of miracle. It would not have been possible to carry on the Ark enough food to feed all these animals for a whole year... Thus, the exodus transition was accomplished by a whole series of miracles. While Noah and his family were sustained on the Ark, the angels were busy remaking the world. They were burying animals to make oil, and plants to make coal, and in many other ways preparing a new world for humanity.²³

Jordan's explanation bears a remarkable similarity to Ellen G. White's visions of what happened at the flood, particularly regarding the formation of oil and coal.

Ian Taylor, another young-earth creationist author, points out the necessity of an amazing miracle by the time Noah and the animals disembarked:

Trying to reconcile the Genesis account of the Flood with the actual fossil record and doing so without appeal to miracle is far from a simple matter. For example, the account requires a rapid regrowth of plants, grasses, and trees on salt-laden sediment (not soil) in order to provide habitation for all the creatures after leaving the ark.²⁴

Technically, Noah would need food not only to sustain all the animals during the voyage, but also food to sustain all the animals after a global flood until re-vegetation and the recovery of niche environments.

God could perform miracles to overcome each and every obstacle if he wished; that is true. What is also true is that the text of Genesis does not say a million miracles took place during the flood. The necessary miracles mentioned by these young-earth creationists, with the exception of the animals coming to Noah (Gen. 6:20), are *assumed* as a logical

implication of a global-flood *interpretation*; they do not come from the biblical text.

Do not mistake our intentions. We affirm the supernatural in the flood account. Noah was told ahead of time what would happen, just as Jesus and the apostles accurately predicted the coming destruction of Jerusalem in their generation by divine foreknowledge. Neither the flood nor the events of AD 70 were expected by those who were destroyed. Both the flood and destruction of Jerusalem were cases of *fulfilled prophecy*, and fulfilled prophecy is, by definition, miraculous. All evangelicals involved in the debate over the scope of the flood agree to the miraculous nature of the event to some degree; the real debate is the extent of the miracle(s).

But this raises a related issue. Global-flood advocates do not always consider how they apply their appeal to miracle inconsistently. Flood geology assumes that *natural processes* we know from our experience worked during the event to fashion the geological column. Miracle is invoked only on an “as needed” basis. Flood geology is essentially an alternative form of uniformitarian geology. Author Davis Young explains:

Although they are not aware of it, modern Flood catastrophists are really proceeding on the same principle as do modern uniformitarian geologists. We both accept the idea that rocks should be explicable in terms of processes that behave in accord with the laws of nature. It is clear that catastrophists are talking in terms of modern-day observable process, a flood, and that this Flood behaves in accordance with natural laws. The only difference is one of scale. But they expect their Flood to do things that floods do.²⁵

In other words, flood geology operates on the assumption of naturalism. David Snoke highlights this issue by saying:

The entire program of flood geology is to argue that science *as we know it* supports their interpretation of the Bible, not to propose unknown laws of physics that no one could guess at unless they were needed to cover up inconvenient facts.²⁶

A fully consistent appeal to miracle undermines flood geology. One of the perennial objections raised by old-earth Christians and unbe-

lievers alike is that flood geologists are arbitrary at this key point; they simultaneously demand geological naturalism *and* the multiplication of miracles over the course of the story.

Once flood geologists grant naturalism in their flood geology, it becomes difficult to make a credible objection against a local-flood view because of naturalistic concerns. *If the story is one gigantic miracle, then how can it be scrutinized scientifically at all?* Or we could state the issue in reverse. By looking for scientific implications of a global flood, flood geologists imply that the physical events in the account were *not* miraculous.

This may sound strange, but those who believe in a local flood are far more consistent and far more *conservative* in handling the physical events recorded in the flood account. They don't engage in wild speculation about worldwide geophysical events. The same basic approach is followed by preterists who view prophecy as fulfilled in first-century events culminating in AD 70 with the Roman invasion of Judea. Preterists shun wild and crazy interpretations of prophecy which imply global geophysical and geopolitical events.

The local-flood view is actually conservative in handling the biblical text. It implies that, when the text says a miracle happened (e.g., God's warning to Noah), a miracle happened. But where the text does not indicate a miracle, local-flood advocates do not assume a miracle.

The Current Status of the Flood Debate

All of these issues are important as an introduction to the debate over the scope of the flood. Those who continue to defend the global-flood view in our day as the universal belief of all Christians in Church history and plain teaching of the Bible must: (1) ignore the ancient understanding of the flood as a local event as shown in Josephus; (2) ignore the pre-modern concept of planet Earth which prevailed in Christendom before Columbus; (3) ignore the covenant context Genesis 5 sets for the flood event with the line of Seth; (4) ignore the local indicators in the account; and (5) solve the supernatural/natural tension inherent in the global flood/flood geology view.

The overwhelming reason given to push all these preliminary issues aside in favor of a global flood is the generous use of language and phrases in the account that *appear* universal in scope. Few consider the possibility that these might be due to the translator's global-flood views rather than the actual meaning of the Hebrew text itself. We will investigate the language in the flood account in Chapter 8.

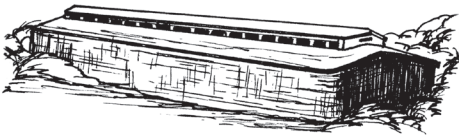
Another weighty reason multitudes are convinced of a global reading of the flood is how New Testament prophecy references the flood event. We will investigate the biblical relationship between the flood and prophecy in Chapter 9.

CHAPTER 8

THE FLOOD AND PROPHECY

Chapter 8 – The Flood and Prophecy

Every defense of a global flood in young-earth creationist literature rightly begins with the biblical text. This is the passage which many claim proves a global flood in the days of Noah:



In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights... For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth. The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than twenty feet. Every living thing that moved on the earth perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; men and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds of the air were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark. The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days. (Gen. 7:11-12, 17-24 NIV)

It is certainly possible that the account teaches a global flood. A global flood seems obvious from a *surface* reading of any modern English translation, especially when combined with our modern conception of planet Earth. The main traditional argument for a local flood is that the flood account was not written originally to modern people in modern English.

If we left it at that, the biblical case for a local flood would be quite weak. However, the important thing to do when interpreting the Bible is compare words and phrases in the Bible to other places where the Bible uses the exact same language. We call this “comparing Scripture with Scripture,” and it is essential to help one understand what the Bible *means* by what it *says*.

The global reading of the flood relies on three key words and phrases which appear absolutely universal at first glance: (1) “earth,” (2) “every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out,” (3) “all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered.” Together, these words and phrases constitute the main arguments for a global interpretation. Everything else in the account could as easily be understood in terms of a local inundation.

The Universal Terms: *Erets*

How should we understand all of these seemingly universal statements in Genesis 7? Consider the word “earth” in the account. Global-flood advocates naturally assume it means planet Earth. But the Hebrew word translated as *earth* in this passage is *erets*.¹ This word carries no inherent global or spherical connotation in Hebrew. *Erets* is translated as land in the Old Testament over a thousand times. It is also translated repeatedly as country and ground. The majority usage of *erets* in the Old Testament refers to a *local* region of land. Gleason Archer, a famous conservative Hebrew scholar, explains one of the textual problems with a global interpretation:

In explanation of this assertion [that the flood was local, not global] it needs to be pointed out that the Hebrew *‘eres*, translated consistently as “earth” in our English Bibles, is also the word for “land” (e.g. the *land* of Israel, the *land* of Egypt). There is another term, *tebel*, which means the whole expanse of the earth, or the earth as a whole. Nowhere does *tebel* occur in this account, but only *‘eres*,

in all the statements which sound quite universal in the English Bible.²

An excellent example of the predominantly local usage of *erets* in Genesis appears just a few chapters after the flood account:

The LORD said to Abram, "Leave your country [*erets*], your people, and your father's household and go to the land [*erets*] I will show you." (Gen. 12:1 NIV)

Translators have smoothed this passage for English readers. In the Hebrew it literally reads, 'Leave your [*erets*]... and go to the [*erets*] I will show you.' Clearly, we shouldn't believe Abraham was to leave planet Earth and go to another planet. This passage only shows how land, country, and earth are all interchangeable translations for the Hebrew term *erets*.

Note the equivalence in these verses:

... the rain was not poured out on the earth [*erets*]. (Ex. 9:33 NKJV)

And the rain fell on the earth [*erets*] for forty days and forty nights. (Gen. 7:12 NIV)

Erets is in both texts, so "earth" in the flood account cannot prove a global flood. A casual reading of the flood account is substantially changed for the modern English reader by replacing "earth" with "land," "country," or even "ground" which are just as appropriate for translation into English as "earth."

There are also many places in the Hebrew Scriptures where the language of the entire earth is included or all men are included in things which we *know* were not global. The examples could be multiplied, but consider these as representative:

This is what Cyrus king of Persia says, "The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth [*erets*]..." (Ezra 1:2 NIV)

I [God] am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth [*erets*] to seize dwelling places not their own. (Hab. 1:6 NIV)

Are we to suspect that the kingdom of Cyrus was global? No, the term “earth” is used in a regional way. The consistent “literalist” has a real problem with Habakkuk 1:6. Archaeology also teaches Babylon was a regional power. Babylon’s conquest did not cover the entire globe, even though the Bible speaks “globally” of the empire.

Jeremiah uses seemingly global terms to describe local events in this passage:

See how the waters are rising in the north; they will become an overflowing torrent. They will overflow the land [*erets*] and everything in it, the towns and those who live in them. The people will cry out; all who dwell in the land [*erets*] will wail. (Jer. 47:2 NIV)

The Hebrew is identical to the language of Genesis 7. It could also be rendered, “They will overflow the *earth* and everything in it... all who dwell in the *earth* will wail.” The prophet is referring to the regional destruction of the Philistines using flood imagery. It has nothing to do with the earth as a globe. Likewise, the term “earth” in Genesis 7 should not be read automatically as planet Earth.

The Universal Terms: *Ge*

Many have pointed out the way the Hebrew word *erets* works in the Old Testament in relation to the flood account. But this limited – or we might say *contextual* – understanding has tremendous implications for a proper understanding of prophecy in the New Testament as well. There is no reason to stop this examination when we get to the New Testament. The Greek equivalent to the Hebrew word *erets* is *ge*. In fact, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX), uses *ge* throughout the flood account, as well as all of the other instances of *erets* in the Hebrew text. That means the same meaning of *erets* applies also to the Greek word *ge* throughout the entire New Testament. Author Samuel Frost explains the general principle of the proper interpretation of *ge* in the New Testament:

We maintain that the apostles’ understanding of “earth” meant “the Land,” more specifically, covenant Israel.³

Another author, Kurt Simmons, explains it this way:

The earth (*ge*) generally stands for Palestine and the Jews and is better understood in its limited sense of the “land.”

The same word occurs in Lk. 21:23 in Jesus' Olivet Discourse about the destruction of the Jewish state.⁴

With this in mind, consider those passages we examined back in Chapter 1. Jesus told the Pharisees of his day:

Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth [*ge*], from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon *this generation*. (Matt. 23:34-36 NKJV)

Jesus claimed they were going to be judged for "all the righteous blood shed on earth [*ge*]." We showed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 that it makes good sense to understand Jesus' condemnation in terms of the *covenant land* rather than the entire planet. They would fill up the measure of their fathers' wickedness as they hardened themselves in their rejection of the Messiah and persecution of the early Church. We see all of this come to pass in the rest of the New Testament. But that is not the only place in the Olivet Discourse where Jesus used the word *ge* (Greek equivalent to *erets* in Hebrew). In the very next chapter Jesus says:

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the *earth* [*ge*] will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Matt. 24:30 NKJV)

As we saw in Chapter 1, Jesus' focus is not on global events. The Olivet Discourse time texts provide us the context for prophetic fulfillment in the first century. The meaning of *ge* provides an additional confirmation of a *local* understanding of the fulfillment of the Olivet Discourse in the 1st century. When Jesus says the "tribes of the earth [*ge*] will mourn," he does not refer to all nations on planet Earth. He refers to *the tribes of Israel* who lived in "the land" during the time of Christ. This is clear from the parallel passage in Luke:

But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great dis-

treasure in the land [*ge*] and wrath upon this people. (Luke 21:23 NKJV)

The land Jesus references is Judea and the people he warned were the Jews of his day — the generation that would live to see all those things come to pass.

The proper understanding of *ge* also relates to another key prophetic text in the New Testament:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements [*stoichion*] will be destroyed by fire, and the earth [*ge*] and everything in it will be laid bare. (2 Peter 3:10 NIV)

In Chapter 4 we showed how the Greek word for elements, *stoichion*, is used to reference the Law of Moses throughout the New Testament. The presence of *ge* in this passage highlights the covenant context of Peter's statement. Peter speaks of the destruction of "the land" and annihilation of the Mosaic economy, all of which took place in AD 70.

Ellen G. White, the chief architect of modern young-earth creationism, offers a perfect example of how both *erets* and *ge* are commonly transposed in modern English, as if they reference planet Earth:

When the flood of waters was at its height upon the earth, it had the appearance of a boundless lake of water. When God finally purifies the earth, it will appear like a boundless lake of fire. As God preserved the ark amid the commotions of the flood, because it contained eight righteous persons, he will preserve the New Jerusalem, containing the faithful of all ages, from righteous Abel down to the last saint which lived. Although the whole earth, with the exception of that portion where the city rests, will be wrapped in a sea of liquid fire, yet the city is preserved as was the ark, by a miracle of Almighty power. It stands unharmed amid the devouring elements. [Quoting 2 Peter 3:10] "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up."⁵

White models a logical link between the interpretation of the flood account and the interpretation of New Testament prophecy. But if *erets* should not be read as “planet Earth” in the flood account, then why should *ge* be interpreted globally in 2 Peter 3? Or we could reverse the question. If *ge* should not be read as “planet Earth” in 2 Peter 3, then why should *erets* be interpreted globally in the flood account?

The implications for the proper understanding of both the Hebrew *erets* and Greek *ge* become even more important as we get to Revelation. A major reason why many place the fulfillment of Revelation into our future is because Revelation uses *seemingly* global language – the exact same language we see in the flood account. *Ge* is used over 60 times in the book.⁶ One example appears in the first chapter:

Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth [*ge*] will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. (Rev. 1:7 NKJV).

John uses similar language here (“coming with clouds”) as we saw in Matthew 24:30 (“Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven”). Once again, the reference is “the land” – *ge*. This is not planet Earth. The universal statement about “every eye” seeing his coming is *limited* by the context of the first century events. The method of interpreting the universal statement in Revelation 1:7 is no different than that used in a local interpretation of the flood in Genesis. Absolutely everyone in the land of Israel saw the coming of Christ as manifested in the destruction of Judea and Jerusalem. After all, they were the ones who pierced the Messiah in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:5 and Zechariah 12:10.

Those who trace out John’s use of the word *ge* in Revelation will get a better picture of the immediate local, or we might better say *covenant* context of that book. Consider this example a few chapters later:

Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth [*ge*]. Behold, I am coming quickly! (Rev. 3:10-11 NKJV)

Many ignore the clear time statement John gives to his audience because the language appears to imply John is speaking about global events. Note however, how the language is *no different* than what

we find in the flood account. Gary DeMar gives this explanation of Revelation 3:10:

Jesus tells us in Revelation 3:10 that the “hour of testing is about to come upon the whole world”... The Greek word translated “world” is not *kosmos* but *oikoumenes*, “the inhabited earth,” the kingdom boundaries of the Roman Empire (see Luke 2:1 for confirmation of this). But doesn’t the qualifier “earth” make this judgment broader than the land of Israel? Not at all since the Greek word for “earth” (*ge* or *ges*) is the same word often translated “soil” (Matthew 13:5, 8, 23), “ground” or “earth” (= dirt; 25:25), “land” (27:45), or “earth” (= world; 16:10). A more accurate translation of Revelation 3:10 would be: “Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the inhabited earth, to test those who dwell upon the land.” God’s testing was reserved for the land of Israel and the destruction of their temple. That judgment is in the past.⁷

Our understanding of the Hebrew word *erets* in the flood account logically relates to our understanding of the Greek word *ge* in the New Testament *because they are equivalent*. Gary DeMar summarizes the connection between these words across the pages of Scripture by quoting from John Sailhamer, a notable local flood advocate:

The “coming” of “the Son of Man” is most often taught as a worldwide event since Jesus states that “all the tribes of the *earth* will mourn” (Matt. 24:30). Again, most Bible translations do not capture the true meaning of the Greek... The New Testament pattern follows the Old Testament pattern. The meaning of the Hebrew word *eretz*, [quoting Sailhamer] “is simply ‘the land’ and not ‘the earth’ as in most English translations. For the most part, it refers to a specific stretch of land in a local, geographical, or political sense... Not only does the Hebrew term *eretz* normally mean ‘land’ as opposed to ‘the earth,’ but it usually refers specifically to the land promised to Abraham (Genesis 15:18). Certainly the term doesn’t always denote ‘the promised land.’ It may be ‘the land’ of Egypt (Exodus 12:1) or simply the place of one’s birth, the ‘homeland’ (Genesis 12:1). But most often

in Genesis and throughout the Pentateuch the term *eretz* refers to the promised land.”⁸

A deeper look at the language of the flood account not only shows the language indicates a local event, it also confirms a *covenant context* for the entire story. *Erets* and *ge* carry a covenant connotation both in Genesis and in New Testament prophecy. Could it be that the Bible references both the flood and what happened in Judea in the first century as great *covenant* judgments in *covenant* history? Is it possible that neither of these examples involve global physical events which took place across planet Earth?

A Partial-Local Flood?

At this point, it is important to note that the same universal statements apply to all elements in the account – dry ground, birds, livestock, wild animals, and man. Some local-flood advocates argue that the flood was *geographically* limited but *anthropologically* universal. They reason that mankind may have been concentrated in one area at the time of the event, so a local flood would have killed all mankind besides Noah’s family. At the same time, they argue the flood did not kill all birds and animals across planet Earth. We might call this a “partial-local” view of the flood.⁹

The first problem with this “partial-local” flood view is chronology. Anthropology suggests that by Abraham’s time there were long established civilizations on most, if not all of the habitable continents. This means “partial-local” advocates must place the flood event tens of thousands of years into human pre-history prior to mankind’s dispersal across the globe. That implies a tremendous gap of time between the flood and time of Abraham. But Genesis indicates the flood happened in relatively close proximity to the lives of Abraham and the patriarchs.*

This problem is compounded because Genesis assumes developed human civilization existed *before* the flood. Genesis records developed farming and domesticated livestock (4:2), the practice of city-building (4:17), not to mention the technology of musical instruments (4:21), and metalworking (4:22) long before the flood. Anthropology suggests these technological developments are relatively recent and not compatible with current research about pre-historic man. The technology ref-

* We will examine the chronology of the flood, Tower of Babel, and Abraham in Chapter 10.

erenced in Genesis before the flood, appears to have been invented in Mesopotamia about 6,000 years ago, a time roughly compatible with the time, historic context, and cultural setting of Genesis in ancient Mesopotamia, but not 20,000 to 30,000 years ago as modern advocates of a “partial-local” flood require.¹⁰

The primary biblical problem for this “partial-local” flood view is the very simple fact that the description in Genesis 7 does not separate mankind out from everything else. The very same universal qualifiers applied to mankind are also applied to the animals, birds and creatures. It is a glaring inconsistency to argue that the account requires that all human beings on planet Earth were destroyed by the flood but does not require the destruction of all animals, birds, and creatures on planet Earth. Everyone should be honest enough with the text to admit that all the seemingly universal statements in the flood account must be applied in the same manner, one way or another. The “partial-local” theory is untenable given the wider context of Genesis and anthropological research. It is also biblically inconsistent in handling the biblical statements we find in Genesis 7.

***Erets* and the Flood in Old Testament Prophecy**

Given the connection between the language of the flood and New Testament prophecy, it should not surprise us to find prophets linking the flood and destruction of Jerusalem. Notice how Isaiah uses *erets* and “face of the *erets*” language in this warning about the impending judgment of Judah in 586 BC:

See, the LORD is going to lay waste the earth [*erets*] and devastate it; he will ruin its *face* and scatter its inhabitants – it will be the same for priest as for people, for master as for servant, for mistress as for maid, for seller as for buyer, for borrower as for lender, for debtor as for creditor. The earth [*erets*] will be completely laid waste and totally plundered. The LORD has spoken this word. (Is. 24:1-3 NIV)

Some commentators claim Isaiah can only be referring to final judgment at the end of the world. But the context shows exactly what Isaiah is pointing to by saying:

No longer do they drink wine with a song; the beer is bitter to its drinkers. The ruined *city* lies desolate; the entrance to every house is barred. In the streets they cry out for

wine; all joy turns to gloom, all gaiety is banished from the earth [*erets*]. *The city is left in ruins, its gate is battered to pieces.* (Is. 24:9-12 NIV)

The fact that Isaiah references a city is clear indication he is speaking about Jerusalem. This is a local judgment; it has nothing to do with global events as Isaiah refers to the coming destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC.

What is most remarkable about this passage is that Isaiah invokes *explicit* flood language and elements when speaking of this coming destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. Carefully examine the flood link between these two passages:

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. (Gen. 7:11 NKJV)

The floodgates of the heavens are opened, the foundations of the earth [*erets*] shake. (Is. 24:18 NIV)

The similarities are uncanny. Isaiah describes the imminent (in his day) local destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC using the same language and images we find in the flood account. Isaiah 24 ends with the similar “collapsing universe” language we see Jesus use in reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The prophet says:

The moon will be abashed, the sun ashamed; for the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders, gloriously. (Is. 24:23 NIV)

Given how *erets* and *ge* are used throughout the Bible there is ample reason to take the phrase “earth” as a reference to a particular locale in Genesis 7, the place where God’s covenant people lived.

The Universal Terms: Face of the *Erets*

Some might object that a local flood is impossible because of the other phrases we find in Genesis 7. What about the seemingly universal phrase “every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out”? Is it possible that this, too, applies within a local context?

This “face of the earth” language occurs regularly in the Bible. English translations sometimes render it in a form which hides the basic

similarities so obvious in the Hebrew, which is unfortunate. Many readers of the English Bible would be surprised if they saw how often this phrase occurs in the Hebrew particularly in cases which are obviously not global.

Genesis 4:14 (NKJV) is a good example of how “face of the earth” refers to a limited part of planet Earth *before* the flood account. Cain says, “Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground.” This is the same “face of the earth” language we see in the flood account, but Cain was not driven from planet Earth. He was banished from a particular region as punishment for the murder of his brother. This example can only allow a local reading.

Another example, later in Genesis, is the famine which happened in Joseph’s day:

The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. (Gen. 41:56 NKJV)

Was this a global famine? No. It was a famine that affected Egypt as well as Canaan. It was a local or regional famine, specific to that part of the world. Another familiar event in covenant history is communicated in the same language. Moses says to Pharaoh:

Or else, if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory. And they shall cover the face of the earth so that no one will be able to see the earth [*erets*] ... For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land [*erets*] was darkened. (Ex. 10:4-5, 15 NKJV)

The plague of locusts on Egypt is communicated in the very same terms as we find in the flood account. Does anyone suggest that the plagues involved global events? No. Though the text does not say, it is commonly assumed that, like the other destructive plagues, the Hebrews were unmolested.

Another interesting use of the “face of the earth” language of Genesis 7 occurs in the account of Balaam and Balak. Balak complains to the prophet:

Look, a people has come from Egypt. See, *they cover the face of the earth*, and are settling next to me. (Num. 22:5 NKJV)

Did the Israelite population cover the globe, or were they limited to a local part of planet Earth? This is merely another good example of how the language was used in a limited context.

It is also important to recognize that this phrase appears regularly in the Old Testament prophets. Speaking of the spiritual condition of Israel, Ezekiel says:

My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the *whole face of the earth*. (Ezek. 34:6 NKJV)

Consider the seemingly global events of Daniel's vision:

And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the *face of the whole earth*, and touched not the ground.... (Dan. 8:5 KJV)

According to Daniel 8:21, the goat in Daniel's vision refers to the kingdom of Greece whose territory never spanned the entire globe.

The most explicit use of flood language and imagery in a geographically limited context occurs in the book of Zephaniah:

"I will sweep away everything from the *face of the earth*," declares the LORD. "I will sweep away both men and animals; I will sweep away the birds of the air and the fish of the sea. The wicked will have only heaps of rubble when I cut off man from the *face of the earth*," declares the LORD. "I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all who live in Jerusalem." (Zeph. 1:2-3 NIV)

The context of Zephaniah makes it clear that the prophet is not referring to a global judgment. Like Isaiah, he uses global language *identical* to Genesis 7 in reference to the coming regional destruction of Judah in 586 BC. This is yet another link between the flood and the 6th-century BC destruction of Jerusalem.

If local-flood opponents were consistent in how they read universal language, they would teach global destruction must have accompanied the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. It is impossible to overlook the linguistic similarities to the Genesis flood. Zephaniah raises a real problem for global-flood advocates. How can the prophet use that language in the context of local judgment if the language itself requires a global reading in Genesis 7?

They have only one way to avoid the obvious implication of this passage for our understanding of the flood. They imply that Zephaniah 1:2-3 has nothing to do historically with the destruction of Judah. Evangelical scholars, Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III, give this explanation:

Before focusing attention on Judah, Zephaniah issues a general warning of coming destruction in broad terminology. God is judge of the whole world, and especially his people, Judah. The expression “face of the earth,” used of the great Flood of Noah’s time (Ge. 6:7; 7:4), refers to more than just a local land, unless a specific limitation is added.¹¹

While it is certainly true that God is judge of the whole world, there is nothing in the context of Zephaniah 1 which suggests the prophet speaks of a worldwide judgment. This desperate approach handcuffs the text in order to protect a prior belief. The authors understand intuitively that if this language can be used in a local way, then the global-flood doctrine is in jeopardy. But their arbitrary method still doesn’t work. Universal-destruction language is not limited to verses 2 and 3. The chapter ends with *more* universal language in direct reference to the destruction of Judah:

Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the LORD’s wrath. In the fire of his jealousy the whole world will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live in the earth [*erets*]. (Zeph. 1:18 NIV)

Notice that Zephaniah’s prophecy also follows the same theme as the flood account. God brings “a sudden end of all who live in the earth [*erets*].”

Zephaniah also gives us the antecedent for an important development in the New Testament. His proclamation of “global” destruction by fire in reference to the destruction of Jerusalem¹² is renewed by Peter in 2 Peter 3. Christians today are not generally familiar with Zephaniah’s prophecy and therefore do not see Zephaniah as the precedent for Peter’s similar prophecy. Zephaniah gives a good background for why Peter’s prophecy of the burning up of the “heavens and earth” in 2 Peter 3 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The similarity between the experience of Zephaniah (who warned prophetically of the imminent desolation of Jerusalem in 586 BC) and Peter (who warned pro-

phetically of the imminent desolation of Jerusalem in AD 70) strongly suggests Peter drew from the prophecy of Zephaniah in his prophetic teaching.

Many local-flood advocates have pointed out how the Hebrew phrase “face of the earth” relates predominantly to a local context in the Old Testament. But once again, this has tremendous implications for a proper understanding of prophecy in the New Testament as well, for there we find this remarkable statement in the Olivet Discourse:

For it will come upon *all those who live on the face of the whole earth*. (Luke 21:35 NIV)

The great tribulation in the first century is communicated in the same descriptive terms as the flood in the days of Noah! Would it not be consistent to view the physical scope of each in similar terms? A local view of the flood implies a first-century fulfillment of prophecy in the physical events culminating in AD 70. The same can be applied in reverse. A fulfilled view of the Olivet Discourse implies a local flood in Genesis.

The Universal Terms: Under Heaven

There is one more phrase in the flood account that many believe simply cannot be applied to local events. What about the last phrase “all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered”? Many place great weight on this singular phrase as proof for a global flood. For example, authors Whitcomb and Morris quote this explanation by Herbert C. Leupold:

Yet since “all” is known to be used in a relative sense, the writer removes all possible ambiguity by adding the phrase, “under all the heavens.” A double “all” (*kol*) cannot allow for so relative a sense. It almost constitutes a Hebrew superlative.¹³

Whitcomb and Morris offer their own explanation of why this biblical statement, in their mind, requires a global flood:

For example, when we read in Genesis 41:57 that “*all* countries came into Egypt to buy grain,” we are not to interpret this as meaning that people from America and Australia came to Egypt for grain. And thus, by the same token, the statement of Genesis 7:19, that “*all* the high moun-

tains that were under the *whole* heaven were covered,” may be interpreted as referring to only *some* high mountains under *part* of the heavens... [T]here are *many* passages, and we believe they are in the vast majority, where universal terms must be interpreted literally... Thus, the analogy with Genesis 41:57 utterly breaks down because *the constant repetition of universal terms* throughout the four chapters of Genesis 6-9 shows conclusively that the question of the magnitude and geographical extent of the Flood was not a merely incidental one in the mind of the writer, but was rather one of primary importance to the entire Flood narrative.¹⁴

Note how Whitcomb and Morris have completely overlooked the wider context of the flood set earlier in Genesis 5 with the genealogy of Seth. Whitcomb and Morris reject the possibility of Genesis 6-9 applying in a limited sense largely because of their understanding of the universal statements and physical phenomena of the flood. They insist on taking the universal phrases literally. The problem is that they never ask the question, “Where else in the Bible is this phrase ‘under heaven’ used?” Should we not interpret even this phrase in light of other Scripture? How does Scripture use this phrase elsewhere?

There are *many* other places in Scripture where the phrase “under heaven” occurs. Some of these cases are to be understood in a global sense. Job provides one example:

For [God] views the ends of the earth and sees everything
under the heavens. (Job 28:24 NIV)

Even this text presents difficulty as a plain statement regarding planet Earth in the modern sense. Did Job speak of the earth as a spherical planet in the same sense as we do in our day? We know his statement is globally universal because of the omniscience of God, not because Job thought about planet Earth globally as we do today. Another text will help illustrate the issue:

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other
name *under heaven* given to men by which we must be
saved. (Acts 4:12 NIV)

Like the Job text, this is global by theological implication. Acts 4:12 is often recited as gospel proclamation, which it is. Yet few understand

Peter's statement in terms Peter's immediate cultural context and audience. Scholars of the culture and politics of the 1st century cultural context from which the claims of Christianity arose shed more light on Peter's claim:

The "Kingdom of God" and "gospel" are usually thought of as terms unique to Christianity. And who else but Jesus was called not only "the son of God" but also "Lord" and "Savior"? In fact, say biblical experts, these terms and concepts were already familiar to residents of the Roman Empire who knew them as references to the authority and divinity of the emperors, beginning notably with Caesar Augustus before the dawn of the first century.¹⁵

According to Greek inscriptions, Augustus was regarded in the Roman Empire as "savior" and "god," and he was credited with establishing a time of peace, the *pax Augusta*, throughout the Roman world during his long reign.¹⁶

Peter's phrase in Acts 4:12 is a redirection of a common Roman phrase used in many Roman legal documents of the time: "Salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven by which men may be saved than Caesar Augustus."

Understood in its cultural context, Peter's statement was a subversive pronouncement of the kingship of Christ to the Jewish leaders (i.e., Sadducees referenced in Acts 4:1) who accepted the imperial claims of Rome in exchange for their authority in Judea. Peter was not communicating globally in a direct manner when he stood before the Sanhedrin and made his proclamation. He was thinking in terms of the universal claims made by the Roman Empire.¹⁷

While the use of the phrase "under heaven" in Job 28:24 and Acts 4:12 is universal *by theological extension*, the phrase is routinely used where the referent is clearly *not* global. Deuteronomy records God's promise to Israel:

This very day I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on *all the nations under heaven*. They will hear reports of you and will tremble and be in anguish because of you.
(Deut. 2:25 NIV)

This is not referring to all nations living on the globe in a modern sense, but to the nations of the region of Canaan who would have been

threatened by the Israelite conquest. Here is one explanation of this text's relevance to the Genesis flood:

[T]he phrase “under the whole heaven,” cannot be taken in its literal sense, but must be understood with limitation; and there are various other passages of Scripture in which the same universal term is used with a restricted signification. See instances in Deut. ii. 25, where a promise is made that the fear of the Jews would be put “upon the nations that are under the whole heaven;” but on comparing this with ch. xi. 25, which lays their “fear” and “dread” “upon all the land” that they should “tread upon,” it will be seen – what, indeed, requires no proof – that the statement applied only to the people of Canaan and the neighbouring nations.¹⁸

As we move from the Hebrew of the Old Testament to the Greek of the New Testament we see, again, there is no essential change in the biblical author's communication. The same non-global use of the phrase “under heaven” is evident at Pentecost:

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from *every nation under heaven*. (Acts 2:5 NIV)

Does this “under heaven” language demand a global reading? Were there American-Indian Jews represented in Jerusalem at Pentecost? African Pygmy Jews? Australian Aboriginal Jews? These civilizations all existed on planet Earth at the time Luke wrote Acts. They are all “under heaven” in the sense global advocates take “under heaven” to mean in Genesis 7.

If the assertion is that “under heaven” language of Genesis 7 *requires* a global conclusion, then should not Acts 2:5 be understood the same way? Was Pentecost a globally diverse convocation of Jews? No. “Every nation under heaven” refers to the local region of the Roman Empire where all Jews lived at the time. Similarly, all the high mountains “under heaven” refers to the local region with which Noah was familiar.

A final example in the New Testament is Paul's statement:

This is the gospel you heard and that has been proclaimed [past tense] to *every creature under heaven*. (Col. 1:23 NIV)

Paul's statement is proof positive that Paul understood what Jesus promised in the Olivet Discourse had come to pass, that "this gospel will be preached in all the world [*oikoumenes*] as a testimony to all nations" (Matt. 24:14).¹⁹ But does it make sense that Paul's reference to "every creature under heaven" applies globally at the time he wrote Colossians? No. This passage refers to the spread of the gospel in the first century across the local region of the known world. The Bible uses "under heaven" language routinely in a geographically limited sense. Would it not make sense that this biblical manner of speaking began in Genesis which records the flood event?

The Result of Deeper Bible Study

Put simply, the global-flood interpretation breaks down when we compare the language and idiom of the flood account with similar examples we find in other parts of the Bible. There is no compelling textual reason to believe Genesis teaches a global-flood event. At the same time, a global-futurist view of prophecy breaks down for identical reasons. There is no compelling textual reason to believe prophecy speaks about global events which remain in *our* future.

The underlying problem, which has caused many conservative Christians to overlook the local indicators in the flood account and in prophecy, is a faulty hermeneutic or principle of interpretation. Whitcomb and Morris state their principles of plain-literal interpretation in the foreword and introduction of their book:

The reader who desires to accept the Biblical account *literally* and without reservation will discover that the authors have shown such a position to be supported by excellent proof and *sound interpretation*... I would suggest that the skeptical reader, in like fashion, before he dismisses the *Biblical-literal* viewpoint of this book as unworthy of notice, should at least give it a careful reading... If a worldwide flood actually destroyed the entire antediluvian human population, as well as all land animals, except those preserved in a special Ark constructed by Noah (*as a plain reading of the Biblical record would lead one to believe*), then its historical and scientific implications are tremendous [emphasis ours].²⁰

Ken Ham, another prominent author in the young-earth creationist movement, echoes their approach by saying:

I take the Bible literally unless it is obviously symbolic. Even where it is symbolic, the words and phrases used have a literal basis.²¹

This is the exact same method promoted by dispensational premillennialism on the other side of the Bible. Consider how similar this interpretive method is to how Charles Ryrie defines dispensationalism:

Dispensationalists claim that their principle of hermeneutics is that of literal interpretation.²²

Tim LaHaye, perhaps the most popular proponent of modern dispensationalism, calls this the “golden rule of biblical interpretation”:

When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, but take every word at its primary, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context clearly indicate otherwise.²³

Global views of the flood and global views of prophecy are rooted in the same interpretive method. This “plain-literal” method applied to prophecy leads global-flood advocates to the conclusion that biblical prophecy refers to global events which must take place in our future. When applied consistently it causes Christians to embrace a global view of the flood and New Testament prophecy.

Viewed this way, one can better understand why it is no coincidence that the global-flood doctrine and dispensational premillennial futurism vaulted to prominence together in America. They are both grounded in a particular way of “seeing” the text of Scripture. They both arise from a *surface reading* in modern English.²⁴ The proper method of interpretation is to go deeper into our study of the biblical text by comparing Scripture with Scripture.*

As Chapter 3 of this book showed, what might be literal for us today was not necessarily literal for someone of Jesus’ day. Josephus used similar and often identical words to describe the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 as Jesus had used to predict those very events 40 years earlier. It is difficult to get any more literal than that.

* We elaborate on the hermeneutic method which underlies this book in Appendix A.

Consistency: Global, Global vs. Local, Local?

At this point in our study we can begin to formulate some observations. The current dominant views of modern evangelical and conservative Christians are (1) young-earth creationism's view of a global flood in Genesis and (2) a futurism's global view of the coming of Christ. These two views are related on an interpretive level. At this time, old-earth creationism is generally taught with an inconsistent mix of a local flood combined with a future global coming of Christ. Preterism is generally taught with an equally inconsistent mix of a global flood combined with a local coming of Christ in our past. We suggest that, given the predominant use of language in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, there is another way that is internally consistent and matches the common language of Scripture better, a local flood combined with a preterist/past fulfillment of the coming of Christ in the 1st century.

What we could call "global-flood futurism" interprets the biblical text regarding the flood and prophecy consistently as speaking about *global* events. What we could call "local-flood preterism" comes to radically different conclusions about the flood and prophecy, yet also interprets the biblical text consistently as speaking about *local* events.

This observation implies that one way for old-earth creationists to make progress for the widespread acceptance of a local flood among modern evangelicals is to abandon a global interpretation of New Testament prophecy. The same is true in reverse. One way for preterists to make progress among evangelicals for a preterist/past view of prophecy (i.e., local fulfillment in AD 70) is to abandon a global-flood interpretation in Genesis. Young-earth creationism predisposes Christians toward a futurist, global view of prophecy.

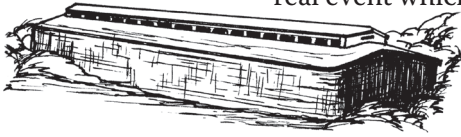
We suggest that neither a local-flood view nor a preterist view can ever be compelling if it handles the Bible inconsistently. In either case, arguments for a global interpretation on one side of the Bible will undermine a local reading on the other because of the general similarity of language we find throughout.

Does this mean that we are at an *impasse* between two internally consistent views we have labeled "global-flood futurism" and "local flood preterism"? Is there any explicit text which can break the stalemate between these contrasting interpretations? We will now turn our attention to the explicit theological comparison between the Genesis flood and prophecy. These texts reveal which view is the only accurate understanding of the Bible's teaching on the flood and prophecy.

CHAPTER 9

WATER AND FIRE

The New Testament contains many references to Noah's flood. These references show how the biblical writers accepted the flood story as a real event which happened in real history. But they also



reveal something else. The flood passages give us insight into how Jesus and the apostles understood the flood event. By looking at what they said

about the flood we can learn what the New Testament teaches about the scope of Noah's flood. Any remaining doubt about the scope of the flood can be settled by the divinely inspired commentary on the flood we find throughout the New Testament.

The Old Testament Background

Before we examine these references to the flood, we need to first look again at one famous Old Testament prophecy that sets an important context. Pay close attention to the flood connection at the end of Daniel's famous 70 weeks prophecy:

Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. *The end of it*

shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined. (Dan. 9:24-26 NKJV)

Understand the historical context of this passage. In Chapter 8 we saw how Isaiah 24 prophesied the coming destruction of Jerusalem (586 BC) in striking flood language and imagery. Daniel is now living under the Babylonian captivity, and his prophecy is focused on redemption. It revolves around the coming of the Messiah to finish transgression, the putting away of the sins of God's people, and the ushering in of everlasting righteousness.

Daniel's prophetic clock sets a time frame for all of this to be accomplished. Daniel's 70 weeks begin with the decree to rebuild Jerusalem. The prophecy is an alarm clock which methodically ticks down to events of the first century.¹ Daniel's vision not only foresees the coming of Messiah and the cross, it extends out to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans – "the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." Then Daniel writes, "The end of it shall be with a flood" (Dan. 9:26 NKJV). He makes a direct comparison between the flood and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple which we know took place in AD 70. Daniel compares the coming "end" to Noah's flood.²

The Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) illuminates this remarkable comparison even further. The Greek word for "flood" in this passage is *kataklusmos* – the same word used throughout the New Testament in reference to Noah's flood. The ancient translators of the Septuagint had Noah's flood, *kataklusmos*, in mind when they translated the Hebrew of Daniel 9:26 into the common Greek of their day.

We get our English word "cataclysm" from this Greek word. Whenever anyone uses the word "cataclysm" in reference to an event they draw a linguistic link between that event and Noah's flood. As an example, whenever preterists say that events of AD 70 were a "cataclysm" or "cataclysmic" they associate the local physical destruction of Judea and Jerusalem with Noah's flood. It works the other way, too. When anyone calls the flood a "cataclysm" or "cataclysmic" they link it to the coming end Daniel foresaw. Of course, few may realize consciously the etymological background of their statement, but a comparison it is. It is a good comparison, because Daniel compares the coming end with Noah's flood.

This comparison is a key that helps to unlock the proper understanding of Noah's flood. The Jews of Jesus' day, who believed Daniel's prophecy, knew that the end of the old covenant and the destruction of the temple were near. The seventy weeks were winding down in the first century. They knew that the destruction was to be as complete as the Genesis flood. The biblical connection between the events of the flood and events foretold in prophecy is not merely an effect of linguistic similarity; it is made *explicit* by that comparison in the biblical text. They expected a prophet, "Messiah the Prince," to further explain the details that had been "sealed up" about five hundred years earlier because the time was "not near."

The Olivet Comparison to the Flood

Jesus builds on Daniel by making the same comparison as Daniel between the Genesis flood and the fire to come:

But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. (Matt. 24:37-39 NKJV)

This text plays a key role in all young-earth creationist literature. Whitcomb and Morris explain their view of the significance:

And this is what the Flood was meant to be as far as its testimony to post-diluvian man is concerned. Jesus Christ pointed back to the great Flood as a reminder of God's power over the world and as a foreshadowing of His future great intervention in judgment on a sinful and rebellious world in the last days (Matthew 24:37-39).³

Ken Ham echoes the same idea when he writes:

Since Jesus Christ in Matthew 24:37-39 uses the event of Noah's Flood as a warning that God has judged the earth, and will judge it again, they would have to agree that God is going to come back as Judge. The next time He will use fire as the method of judgment rather than water.⁴

Whitcomb, Morris, and Ham all assume that the coming Jesus speaks of *remains in our future*. As one event is, so is the other. The parallelism is clear in Jesus' statement. Given this comparison, it is no surprise that when American Christians are dominated by a future, global interpretation of prophecy, they logically demand a global flood. The logic goes like this. Since the coming of Christ must involve physical events which take place across planet Earth, Noah's flood involved physical events which took place across planet Earth. We could say it the other way as well. If all planet Earth was destroyed by water in the days of Noah, then all planet Earth will be destroyed by fire at the coming of Christ.

Local-flood advocates, who are generally dedicated to dispensational premillennialism or more traditional forms of global futurism, struggle with this biblical argument. Most old-earth creationist books which defend a local flood do not even mention the New Testament comparisons!⁵ It is not hard to see why. These are problem texts for those who want to have it both ways: a local interpretation of the flood and a global interpretation of prophecy. This omission in nearly every published defense of a local flood shows just how difficult it will be for a local flood to be widely accepted so long as Christians hold to a future, global view of prophecy.

Of course, this oft-repeated argument from the New Testament comparisons looks quite different to those who believe the Olivet Discourse was fulfilled in local events culminating in AD 70. If the coming of Christ took place in AD 70, then the argument becomes a powerful biblical argument for a *local* flood.

The Three-Way Comparison by Jesus

To appreciate the full sense of what Jesus warned in Matthew 24:37-39, we need to look at Luke's parallel account:

But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and *destroyed them all*. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and *destroyed them*

all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. (Luke 17:25-30 NKJV)

Luke's account of the Olivet Discourse adds an element not mentioned by Matthew. Luke draws a *three*-way comparison: the "day when the Son of Man is revealed" is compared to (1) the days of Noah *and* (2) the days of Lot. The coming of Christ is compared not only to the flood, but *also to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah*.⁶

All Christians who believe that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was a historical event also believe that it was a localized event. This inclusion of Sodom in the Olivet comparison has profound implications. Sodom presents a problem for all who argue for a global flood from the comparisons we find in the Olivet Discourse. If the comparison can be used at all, then all *three* events should be understood in similar terms – the presence of Sodom in the comparison implies they are all local!

Young-earth creationists who rely on the Olivet comparison in Matthew tend to slight the Luke comparison because it *disproves* both their global-flood doctrine and their global-futurist doctrine. That is, if they were consistent with their own argument. Whitcomb and Morris seem blithely unaware of the ramifications of the three-way comparison in their comment on Luke 17:26-30:

Now it is very important that we observe the context into which our Lord places the Flood-destruction. It is placed alongside the destruction of Sodom and the destruction of the ungodly at the time of Christ's Second Coming. This fact is of tremendous significance in helping us to determine the sense in which the word "all" is used in reference to those who were destroyed by the Flood.⁷

The context is significant to be sure. Perhaps the best way to honor the comparison Jesus makes is to accept that the local physical destruction of Sodom (which destroyed them all) is like the local-flood event (which destroyed them all) which is like the coming of Christ in the local events culminated in AD 70 (which destroyed them all).

Ironically, local-flood advocates sometimes make use of the comparison between the flood and destruction of Sodom when it suits their purposes. Speaking on the flood, David Snoke writes:

In Luke 17:28-29, Jesus draws a parallel with Sodom, which was clearly a local destruction. Both Luke 17:27 and 17:29 literally say that “all” (“panta,” in Greek) was destroyed, yet we know that in the case of Sodom this does not mean everything in the world, but simply all the people (and their “world,” or culture).⁸

Would not the same principle have to apply to the other two elements in the comparison? If we apply the same logic to all elements in the comparison, then we would arrive at the conclusion that the flood destroyed all people in Noah’s “world or culture,” the destruction of Sodom destroyed all people in that “world or culture,” and the coming of Christ destroyed all those remaining in his Jewish “world or culture.”

Preterists will also use the comparison of Sodom’s “all” to show that the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 fulfills the Olivet Discourse. Gary DeMar makes this astute observation about Luke 17:22-32:

One of the arguments used by dispensationalists against a first-century fulfillment of the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24) is their claim that only a worldwide tribulation can give meaning to prophetic events... [T]he Bible compares a local fiery conflagration to the time of “the days of the Son of Man” (Luke 17:26), which I believe is a reference to the judgment coming of Jesus in the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70... Notice that two OT stories are used: Noah’s flood that “came and destroyed them all” (17:27) and the day that Lot went out from Sodom and “it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all” (17:29). The destruction of Sodom was local, and yet it is used to describe the Great Tribulation. Notice the comprehensive language: “and destroyed them all,” that is, all those in Sodom, not everyone in the world.⁹

Everyone seems to dance around the elephant in Luke 17:25-30. There are *three* elements involved in the comparison. It is inconsistent to argue for a comparison in the Olivet Discourse, but then leave out *any* one of the three elements. To sum up the enormous ramifications of Luke 17:25-30, we note the following points:

1. Young-earth/global-flood advocates conveniently ignore the Sodom comparison in this text. Their argument for a global flood fails, be-

cause if there is a comparison in the Olivet Discourse at all, then that comparison proves a *local* flood and a coming of Christ in the *local* physical events of AD 70. Everyone agrees that Sodom was a local event. It is a prominent part of the three-way comparison. According to their own logic based on the comparison in the Olivet Discourse, young-earth/global-flood advocates should accept a local flood and the fulfillment of prophecy in the local physical events of AD 70. There is a comparison in the Olivet Discourse, and it includes Sodom. Therefore, the flood, Sodom, and coming of Christ all occurred in local events.

2. Old-earth/local-flood advocates who maintain a futurist view of prophecy conveniently ignore the comparison of both Genesis events to the coming of Christ. They get two out of three right. However, this text undermines their belief in a future coming of Christ with attendant global events across planet Earth. Old-earth/local-flood advocates, who view both the flood and destruction of Sodom as local events, should also take the next logical step and accept the fulfillment of prophecy in the local physical events of AD 70. This yields a compelling *biblical* argument for a local flood in Genesis.
3. Preterists who maintain a global view of the flood ignore that Luke's comparison between Sodom and A.D. 70 also involves Noah's flood. Global-flood preterists get two out of three right, but miss how their view of prophecy emphasizes the fact that Noah's flood was a local event in covenant history. Preterists should apply their arguments consistently back to the flood account. A local flood in Genesis enhances the biblical argument for a preterist view of New Testament prophecy in light of the three-way comparison.

We believe Jesus when he compares all three events. All three elements – the flood, the destruction of Sodom, and the coming of Christ – involve physical events of limited scope. There is a way to do justice to Jesus' three-way comparison. The Bible teaches a local flood in Genesis and that prophecy was fulfilled in the local physical events of AD 70.

Why Sodom is Central to Prophecy

A further word needs to be said about the appearance of Lot and Sodom in the Olivet Discourse. Due to the heavy emphasis many place on the flood as a global event, Christians often neglect the large role the story of Sodom plays in prophecy. A common way of looking at the

flood and coming of Christ can be summed up by young-earth creationist author Gary North. In a comment on Luke 17:27, he makes no mention of Sodom when he writes:

The Noachic Flood is the archetype of *physical* discontinuities in history, an event not to be matched again until the final judgment.¹⁰

The element of Sodom, so explicit in Luke's account, is completely absent in North's analysis. This is merely one example of a general tendency among global-flood advocates. Their focus on the supposed universal scope of the flood causes them to overlook the significant role Sodom plays in prophecy. The reason for this neglect is simple. Neither global flood nor dispensational premillennial viewpoints can make sense out of why Jesus would provide such a prominent place for Lot and Sodom in his prophetic teaching. Why would Jesus make such a big deal about Lot and Sodom when teaching about his coming in glory?

The answer comes from the wider context of the Olivet Discourse. Jesus turned the account of Sodom into a warning for his hearers about what was to come in *their* lifetime. Jesus said:

When *you* see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, *you* will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, *let those in the city get out*, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. (Luke 21:20-22 NIV)

This warning is difficult to understand if Jesus is referring to global events. How can anyone escape a global great tribulation? But if the Olivet Discourse is about events centered in Judea and Jerusalem, the warning Jesus gives to leave *immediately* makes perfect sense.

That warning Jesus gave to *his* audience explains why the story of Lot is such a prominent element in the Olivet Discourse. Those listening to Jesus would need to leave Jerusalem *quickly* just as Lot left Sodom in order to be saved from the flood-like destruction! That makes the entire story and detail of Sodom and Lot directly relevant to Jesus' generation. Notice how Luke's text continues with a direct reference to Lot's wife:

On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise,

no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot's wife! (Luke 17:31-32 NIV)

Lot's wife was destroyed because she had a longing to return to Sodom. Jesus is telling his audience to learn a lesson. They, too, would be destroyed if they gave in to their longing for earthly Jerusalem once the armies surrounded the city. If they acted as Lot's wife did, they would be destroyed in the Jewish War which culminated in AD 70. Jesus expected them to learn something from, and act in terms of, these stories.¹¹

Throughout the New Testament the *physical* lesson in the Olivet Discourse doubles as a *spiritual* warning against the impulse among the early Christians. The recurring temptation was to forsake Christ's gospel and return to Judaism – a human works-based view of salvation. Paul and the other writers warned their audience of the dangers of returning to Judaism. Their spiritual teaching was a mirror of this amazing historical story.

The details of Luke's account once again affirm a local reading of the Olivet Discourse, even though the spiritual lessons apply in every age or cultural context. Faithful obedience to Jesus Christ is the way to true life and God's salvation. God saves those who trust in his promises. Only those who flee from the doomed works of their own hands and rest in the sacrifice of Christ will escape the destruction of hell.

The Three-Way Comparison by Peter

We must keep the Olivet Discourse comparisons in mind as we move on to another place in the New Testament which mentions the flood. Peter uses the same examples Jesus gave in the Olivet Discourse. Notice that the *three-way* comparison Jesus made in Luke 17:26-30 is repeated in 2 Peter 2 in precisely the same order. Peter writes:

If [God] did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) – if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and hold

the unrighteous for punishment until the day of judgment.
(2 Peter 2:5-9 NIV)

Peter compares both the flood and the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah to what he saw as very near: the day of judgment. Peter is not teaching something *de novo*. He is reiterating and expanding on what Jesus had *already taught in the Olivet Discourse*. Peter's "day of judgment" is synonymous with the coming of Christ in the Olivet Discourse.¹²

Most global-flood advocates overlook the mention of Sodom and Gomorrah when they reference Peter's famous flood/fire comparison we find in 2 Peter 3. That is unfortunate, because 2 Peter 2 lays the *context* by showing that Sodom and Gomorrah are "an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly." The destruction of Sodom was not a global event! Neither was the imminent destruction of Jerusalem.

The key is to remember that Sodom is involved in the wider context when we get to that flood passage which looms large in all young-earth creationist literature. Peter writes:

By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. (2 Peter 3:6-7 NIV)

Published authors in the young-earth creationist movement make this a primary biblical argument for a global flood. Notice the explicit parallel between the "waters" which destroyed that world and the "fire" which would destroy the Jewish "heaven and earth" of the old covenant system in AD 70. Whitcomb and Morris give a representative example of the major biblical argument for a global flood:

But it is the second of these two events, the Flood, which serves as the basis of Peter's comparison with the Second Coming and the final destruction of the world. For even as "the world that then was" perished by *water*, so "the heavens that now are, and the earth," protected as they are, by God's eternal promise, from another aqueous cataclysm (Gen. 9:11-19), have, nevertheless, "been stored up for *fire*, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men."

Let us now consider the implications of this passage with respect to the geographical extent of the Flood... It was

the Flood to which Peter appealed as his final and incontrovertible answer to those who chose to remain in willful ignorance of the fact that God had *at one time* in the past demonstrated His holy wrath and omnipotence by subjecting “all things” to an overwhelming, cosmic catastrophe that was on an absolute par with the final day of judgment, in which God will yet consume the earth with fire and will cause the very elements to dissolve with fervent heat.¹³

Again, local-flood advocates who remain committed to a global reading of 2 Peter 3 have no defense against this biblical argument. The logic is compelling for audiences who are convinced that 2 Peter 3 refers to the end of planet Earth and our universe. It always will be. This is just one more reason why churches dominated by dispensational premillennialism are generally dominated by young-earth creationism. Yet once we recognize that the end of the old “heavens and earth” is the end of the old covenant age, culminating with the local events of AD 70, the entire biblical picture of Noah’s flood changes. *Preterism logically triggers a shift in the biblical understanding of the flood.* It demonstrates that Noah’s flood was local, limited to a *covenant context* just like the fiery events of AD 70.

Some preterists see the comparison without really understanding the full ramifications of their views. Author Douglas Wilson, a global-flood advocate, says this about 2 Peter 3:

A few verses above, he has stated that the antediluvian world *perished in water*. That age abruptly ended. *In the same way*, he argues, the present heaven and earth will end in *fire* – which it did in the cataclysm of 70 A.D [emphasis ours].¹⁴

Wilson equated the events of AD 70 with Noah’s flood by using the term “cataclysm.” He also suggests that the physical events which involve *water* are comparable with the physical events which involved *fire*. His explanation unwittingly demonstrates the biblical argument for a local flood.

David Chilton, as was his tendency, implied much more than he probably meant at the time when he wrote:

As Jesus had repeatedly warned (cf. Matthew 12:38-45; 16:1-4; 23:29-39), upon this evil and perverse generation would come the great “Day of Judgment” foretold in the

prophets, a “destruction of ungodly men” like that suffered by the wicked of Noah’s day (2 Peter 3:5-7). Throughout His ministry Jesus drew this analogy (see Matthew 24:37-39 and Luke 17:26-27). Just as God destroyed the “world” of the antediluvian era by the Flood, so would the “world” of first-century Israel be destroyed by fire in the fall of Jerusalem.¹⁵

Chilton overlooks the role Sodom plays in the prophetic teaching of Christ, but he does show that the subject in the biblical comparison is *covenant* “worlds.” Notice he has quotation marks around both instances of “world.” The subject in the water and fire comparison is not planet Earth. Note how James Jordan must equivocate on his definition of “world” to maintain both a global flood view and his preterist beliefs:

“Flood,” is used by God several times in Daniel 11 for an overflowing army crossing a boundary and sweeping into *a land*; Daniel 11:10, 22, 26, & 40. Here also the “flood” is parallel to “war”:

and its terminus – like a flood
and to a terminus – war

The reference to “the flood” must, however remind us of Noah’s flood, which destroyed the whole world. The coming event will end the Old Creation and bring in a New One [emphasis ours].¹⁶

Jordan believes that the flood was a global event that came upon “the whole world.” Yet he also believes that the “Old Creation” ended with the events during the first century, not the global end of planet Earth! Is this a consistent view of the Bible?

The destruction of the flood by water is as surely limited in physical scope as was the destruction of Jerusalem and the land of Israel by fire! The linguistic similarity and explicit theological comparison from Daniel 9 through the entire New Testament allow no other conclusion than that *the Bible teaches a local flood*.

By now you can appreciate the art on the front cover of this book. One over-arching theme of this book is captured by James Robert Kessler’s original painting. The *three*-way comparison at the heart of New Testament prophecy is displayed graphically in his remarkable work.¹⁷

The (Rain)Bow of God's Covenant Wrath

There is one more subtle yet direct link to the flood in the New Testament. In order to understand this link we have to look back at a significant detail in the flood account:

And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth [*erets*]. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth [*erets*], that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. (Gen. 9:12-15 KJV)

The sign of God's covenant with Noah was a bow. We tend to think of it as the rainbow in the sky, and that is accurate because this passage says it is placed in the sky and seen when it rains. But the rainbow is a visual manifestation of a deeper image. The bow in this text symbolizes a weapon, God's bow, that metaphorical weapon God used to wipe out Noah's corrupt generation.

The peace covenant referenced in Genesis 9:12-15 is the result of the pleasing aroma of Noah's sincere sacrifice which prefigures another pleasing sacrifice in the sight of God, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The symbol for the peace covenant is the bow in the sky. The image is both graphic and symbolic. After the flood, God took his weapon of war and hung it up high in storage after the flood. Jamieson, Faussett, and Brown explain the visual significance of the rainbow and why it is a symbol of peace for God's faithful covenant people:

No external sign could have been chosen for this purpose more suitable, from its natural properties, than the rainbow... [I]ts rundle or part which should look toward the object aimed at, is always from the earth, showing thereby that it does not aim at men. And it has no string, which shows that the master will not shoot; so that a bow unbent, or without a string, is a proper symbol of peace and friendship.¹⁸

Modern commentators also point out the weapon imagery of the bow in the cloud:

The Hebrew reads simply “bow,” a battle weapon and a hunting instrument... Here the warrior’s bow is hung up, pointed away from the earth.¹⁹

Many Christians assume the story of God’s bow in the clouds ends in Genesis 9. Few realize that the rainbow is the symbol of God’s mighty weapon put out of use because of a pleasing sacrifice. God’s bow is placed back into service whenever God judges his enemies as Psalm 7:12, 45:5, and Isaiah 41:2 demonstrate. Another relevant example of God’s bow is found in the prophetic book of Habakkuk. The context of Habakkuk is the imminent destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. The prophet recounts the glorious divine judgments in Israel’s history:

You uncovered your bow, you called for many arrows. You split the earth with rivers; the mountains saw you and writhed. Torrents of water swept by; the deep roared and lifted its waves on high. Sun and moon stood still in the heavens at the glint of your flying arrows, at the lightning of your flashing spear. (Hab. 3:9-11 NIV)

The reference to the deep lifting its waves on high is probably a metaphorical description of the parting of the Red Sea as Israel left Egypt. Habakkuk also uses “collapsing universe” language in reference to God’s mighty judgment on Egypt, the nation which oppressed God’s true people. Habakkuk uses the same type of apocalyptic language in reference to national judgment as we find in Matthew 24:29 where Jesus used that type of imagery in reference to God’s judgment coming on national Israel, a nation which also oppressed God’s true people by persecuting the Church.²⁰ The imagery in Habakkuk 3 is significant because the prophet’s repeated reference to God’s bow and “flying arrows” is rooted ultimately in the flood account in Genesis.

The book of Lamentations applies the bow imagery to what God did (past tense) in the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem in 586 BC:

Like an enemy *he has strung his bow*; his right hand is ready. Like a foe he has slain all who were pleasing to the eye; he has poured out his wrath like fire on the tent of the Daughter of Zion. The Lord is like an enemy; he has swallowed up Israel. He has swallowed up all her palaces and

destroyed her strongholds. He has multiplied mourning and lamentation for the Daughter of Judah. (Lam. 2:4-5 NIV)

With that Old Testament background regarding God's bow, we can turn to one more place in the New Testament which makes a link to Noah's flood as well as national judgment for disobedience in Israel's past. John writes:

I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a white horse! *Its rider held a bow*, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest. (Rev. 6:1-2 NIV)

The rider on the white horse is none other than Jesus Christ. He holds God's bow as he rides to battle against those who became God's enemies. The bow in Revelation 6:2 is one more demonstration of the connection between the flood and New Testament prophecy. Chilton explains the significance:

We should ask a rather obvious question at this point—so obvious that we are apt to miss it altogether: *Where did Christ get the bow?* The answer (as is usually the case) begins in Genesis. When God made the covenant with Noah, He declared that He was no longer at war with the earth, because of the "soothing aroma" of the sacrifice (Gen. 8:20-21); and as evidence of this He unstrung His bow and hung it up "in the Cloud" for all to see (Gen. 9:13-17)... It was thus necessary that the first Rider should be seen carrying the Bow of God's vengeance, to signify the unleashing of the Curse upon Israel's ground; for these apostates, the Noachic covenant is undone.²¹

Chilton is correct to place the relevance of God's bow in a covenant context, related to Israel. The appearance of God's bow in Revelation 6:2 is the fulfillment of the prophecy given in the Song of Moses regarding the end of Israel:

"I will hide my face from them," he said," and see what *their end* will be; for they are a perverse generation, children

who are unfaithful... I will heap calamities upon them and
spend my arrows against them. (Deut. 32:20, 23 NIV)

Moses foretold of a time to come at the “end” when God’s bow would be used against Israel.

Why did God put his bow back in service in AD 70? The answer is related to the same reason the original bow was placed in the cloud. Noah’s sacrifice was a “pleasing aroma” to God and brought peace. Yet what happened during New Testament times? Unbelieving Jews rejected the Messiah and his atoning sacrifice – the pleasing aroma to God – and hardened themselves against the gospel. For these unbelievers, as referenced in the book of Hebrews, “no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire” (Heb. 10:26-27 NIV). Those who deliberately sinned against the truth “trampled the Son of God under foot” (Heb. 10:29 NIV). That is why God’s weapon, the war bow, was placed back in service in Revelation 6:2. The peace covenant was broken because of the apostasy and unbelief of national Israel whom God destroyed in the conflagration of AD 70.

The covenant context of God’s bow we see in Revelation, Habakkuk, Lamentations, and Deuteronomy suggest, once again, a *covenant context* for the flood account in Genesis 5-9. All of these events – the flood in the days of Noah, the exodus, the Song of Moses, the Babylonian invasion of Judah in the days of Habakkuk, and the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and Judea in John’s day – parallel each other as national judgments. All of these events took place in a covenant context and were local in physical detail.

This covenant context explains God’s unconditional promise in the peace covenant that “the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.” God honored this promise in *covenant* history. God sent many covenant judgments on Israel. God sent plagues, wasting disease, droughts and famines upon Israel. God sent invading armies in judgment. God never again destroyed his covenant people *en masse* as we see in the flood story. Never again, in all redemptive history, does God destroy all flesh by waters of a flood. In every case of God’s covenant judgment there remained a faithful remnant that God protected.

The remnant theme is picked up by Paul and applied to believers in the first century in places like Acts 15:17, Romans 9:27, and 11:1-10. John is doing much the same with his vision of the 144,000 (symbolizing the perfect number of Jewish Christians) as well as the great multitude

“from every nation, tribe, people, and language (symbolizing Gentile Christians) in Revelation 7.

All Mankind?

As we look at Revelation in its proper covenant context, relating historically to the local destruction of Judea and Jerusalem, we can easily understand another reason why Christians make the same mistake in “seeing” a global flood in Genesis and global events in prophecy. The very same universal “mankind” language we see in the flood account is also conspicuous in Revelation. Consider this example:

And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of *mankind*... A third of *mankind* was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury. The rest of *mankind* that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts. (Rev. 9:15, 18-21 NIV)

Author Gary DeMar explains the contextual nature of John’s statement regarding a portion of “mankind,” and offers a good explanation of how events in the first century fulfilled a prophecy in Zechariah 13:

The focus of Revelation is on Jerusalem’s coming judgment... It’s in Revelation 9:15 that the four angels “kill a third of mankind.” If this judgment takes place in the land of Israel, then the use of “mankind” (lit., *men*) is a reference to those living in Israel during the time of the siege. Josephus records that more than a million Jews were killed during the war. This number is probably more than a third of the population, but we know that there were judgments to come (Rev. 16) before the final Roman onslaught against the temple and city. Eventually the total number killed will come to two-thirds of the population (Zech. 13:8), the million mentioned by Josephus.²²

John is speaking within a first century covenant context. The same covenant context would apply to the “mankind” language in the story of the flood. There is no reason to believe that the flood account or the book of Revelation references all human beings upon planet Earth if we understand the contextual nature of both.

Local Flood = Local Prophecy

Perhaps the best way to demonstrate the similarity between a local-flood view (old-earth creationism) and a local-prophecy view (preterism) is to compare quotes from two prominent authors from each view side by side in order to demonstrate the similarity of thought:

The flood was local to the Mesopotamian valley. The animals that came, prompted by divine instinct, were the animals of that region; they were preserved for the good of man after the flood. Man was destroyed within the boundaries of the flood; the record is mute about man in America or Africa or China.²³

Keep in mind that the tribulation described by Jesus in Matthew 24 was local, confined to the land of Israel... The tribulation had reference to the Jews, the people of Judea (Matthew 24:16; Luke 21:20-24); it was not a worldwide tribulation.²⁴

If you think carefully about these two views on opposite ends of the Bible, it is not hard to see that they both handle similar biblical language according to the same method of interpretation, from the waters of the flood to the fires of AD 70.

So similar are these viewpoints that premillennial apologists have chided preterists to get consistent and adopt an old-earth/local flood view of Genesis. In a recent public debate, dispensational author Thomas Ice challenged Gary DeMar on this point:

What [young-earth] creationism teaches us is that the God of the Bible intervenes on a global scale. The apostle Peter clearly reminds us that just as God intervened globally at the flood, he will intervene globally at the Second Coming. Sadly, DeMar’s naturalistic approach to eschatology does not fit the biblical paradigm of divine intervention on a global scale. This is a matter of consistency. If one holds to a supernatural view of past history then one

ought to hold to a supernatural view of future history as I have presented here tonight... When one interprets the Olivet Discourse naturally, as Christ intended, it results in the realization that the Great Tribulation is future to our day... On the other hand, if you agree with Gary that it is a past event, then you stand the meaning of Christ's teaching on its head based upon "this generation." Here's my challenge, Gary. Either adopt an old-earth, local-flood view of Genesis that fits with your preterist eschatology or adopt a supernatural futurist view of eschatology that fits with a young-earth global-flood view, thank you.²⁵

There is great similarity between local-flood and preterist views. The story of Noah's flood parallels the story of the New Testament in many remarkable ways. Milton Terry summarizes the theological parallels:

The judgment of the flood marked the end or consummation of an age, and is a notable type of every similar crisis in human affairs which the prophets are wont to call 'the great and terrible day of the Lord.' Such crises break in sudden horror on a perverse and unbelieving generation... [It] was not only the signal end of an old world, but it also ushered in a new era in the history of man. The family of Noah... were a chosen remnant destined to open a new age, receive new commandments, and enter into covenant relations with God. In all these facts we recognize a type of the consummation of another and more historic age, when a wicked and adulterous generation were visited with overwhelming judgment, and their city and sanctuary were destroyed as with a flood (Matt. xxiv, 15-22; comp. Dan. ix, 26, 27).²⁶

Noah was a preacher of righteousness in his generation (Gen. 6:9). So were Jesus, the apostles, and early Christians. The days of Noah were filled with violence and murder (Gen. 6:11). The same was true in the first century as the Jews put Jesus on the cross and then persecuted and killed the Christians. They stoned Stephen (Acts 7:54ff). They incited others to behead James and persecute Peter (Acts 12:2-3). They harassed the Church across the Roman Empire so that the souls who were slain cried out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy

and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth [ge] and avenge our blood?" (Rev. 6:10 NIV).

By the time of the Roman invasion of Judea, unbelieving Jews had divided into warring factions and degenerated into wanton violence that polluted the land, just like the days before the flood. Even when the Romans were at the gates of Jerusalem the rival factions of zealots continued to slaughter each other, even spilling blood inside the temple walls. Then, in AD 70, the judgment for all the righteous blood shed in the land finally came upon them, bringing relief and vindication to God's faithful people, the holy and pure bride of Jesus Christ.

Solely Biblical Arguments for a Local Flood

A proper understanding of these biblical events will yield many implications for Christian theology and a true biblical worldview. We hope to develop some of these implications regarding the Genesis debate in the pages to come.

But before we move on we would like to emphasize to the reader that the arguments for a local flood that have been developed in these pages are *solely* biblical. We have not raised one scientific objection to a global flood. No one can legitimately claim that we have used science to interpret the Bible. We are interpreting the Bible in terms of itself in order to understand what the Bible *means* by what it *says*. We have shown that there is good reason to believe the *Bible* teaches a local flood. We will now examine the flood as it relates to the wider context of Genesis and the story of the tower of Babel. This investigation will provide more biblical evidence that Noah's flood was local to the land of historical Mesopotamia, just as the great tribulation was local to the historical land of Israel.

CHAPTER 10

THE FLOOD AND THE TOWER OF BABEL



Now the whole world [*erets*] had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, “Come let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth [*erets*].” But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The LORD said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.” So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth [*erets*], and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel—because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth [*erets*]. (Gen. 11:1-9 NIV)

The Global View of Babel

The same *seemingly* universal language of the flood and prophecy is also used in the biblical record of Babel. Christians generally view Babel in universal terms involving a huge civilization. John Whitcomb, Jr. gives a representative “global” view of the tower of Babel:

God’s judgment of the Tower of Babel was one of the greatest catastrophes in the history of the world. In one moment, a massive, highly complex building project,

involving the entire human race, came to an end. Thousands of workers suddenly found themselves incapable of communicating with anyone outside their extended family group. Overwhelmed by fear and frustration, each family group moved away from the others. Mankind has never recovered.¹

While there are volumes written to discuss the scope of the flood event, few spend much effort examining Babel and its relationship to the flood. Local-flood advocates do not apply their principles of interpreting the Hebrew word *erets*, which underlies the English “whole world,” “earth,” and “face of the whole earth” throughout the Babel story. The issue of Babel is severely neglected in popular old-earth creationist books which seems odd given how close the account of Babel appears to the flood account in Genesis. To our knowledge, no one has developed a “local” view of Babel.

Global-flood advocates spend far more time writing about Babel because of how their understanding of Babel fits into their corresponding view of prophecy. Morris gives a representative example of this connection between Babel and a future, global view of prophecy:

This monstrous system of evolutionary pantheism, accompanied by polytheism, astrology, spiritism, animism, and eventually humanism, atheism and Satanism, thus originated at Babel and was spread throughout the world when God confused the languages and dispersed the unified population there around the earth (Genesis 11:9).²

Just as pantheistic evolution served as the world’s religion in the early days, so it will do again in the last days. The New Age is really nothing but a revival in modern garb of the Old Age—that is, the first age after the Flood, when King Nimrod led the world in a united rebellion against the Creator... [T]he most effective thing the remnant of believers in God and His Word can do to offset this is to believe and teach a soundly Biblical and scientific creationism. This must include the great truth that the Creator has now also become the Lamb of God, our sin-forgiving Savior, and soon will return as eternal King. In that day, “These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings” (Rev. 17:14).³

We have already dealt with the many biblical problems with Whitcomb and Morris' global futurism. There are more problems with their view of what happened at Babel. Those who advocate a global flood routinely overlook the serious implications for the story of Babel, implications based upon *their own assumptions*. The biblical relationship between the flood and Babel vindicate a local flood. The story of the flood and Babel, taken together, provide another compelling biblical proof that neither judgment involved universal, planet-wide events.

Let's Bake Bricks!

The details in the account of Babel are sparse. One detail which the writer of Genesis 11 thought significant has been overlooked in young-earth creationist literature. Notice what the builders used to make their bricks and mortar:

They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake [fire] them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar instead of mortar. (Gen. 11:3 NIV)

Why would the builders choose these difficult and expensive options? Mesopotamia did not have an abundance of trees to fuel brick kilns. Why would they go through the extra step of firing brick?

These details indicate the builders of Babel tried to waterproof their structure. Unlike irregular stone, bricks fit closely. Unlike typical mud bricks, fired bricks are waterproof and maintain their integrity when wet. The builders used tar to *waterproof* their structure just as Noah used tar to waterproof the ark. The same "tar" is used to waterproof the ark/basket used for Moses (Ex. 2:3). This suggests the city and Tower of Babel were constructed for the practical purposes of creating immunity from God's judgment. They wanted protection from any future flood as they settled in the plain of Shinar.

Today, hardly anyone thinks of Babel as a defiant response to the flood.⁴ Yet this understanding was common a century ago, before the dominance of dispensational premillennialism. One old American history book for children explains:

Somewhere in Babylonia the people built a great tower called the Tower of Babel, which you have probably heard about. It was more like a mountain than a tower... Some say the Tower of Babel and others like it were built so that

the people might have a high place to which they could climb in case of another flood.⁵

This understanding of the Babel account finds ancient support in Josephus, who lived contemporary with the early Church:

Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God... He also said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would *build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach!* and that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers! Now the multitude were very ready to follow the determination of Nimrod, and to esteem it a piece of cowardice to submit to God; and they built a tower... It was built of burnt brick, cemented together with mortar, made of bitumen, *that it might not be liable to admit water* [emphasis ours].⁶

Josephus' account gives slightly different details than Genesis, but it is perfectly compatible with the biblical account. Both Scripture and Josephus specify that the tower was built of burnt brick instead of stone and tar instead of mortar.

From Where Did All the People Come?

The logical relationship between the flood and Babel suggests these two events happened close together in biblical history. The textual evidence in Genesis agrees. The flood and Babel represent contiguous accounts in Genesis. The flood event is recorded in Genesis 6 through 9. Genesis 10 is filled with genealogical information. Genesis 11 immediately carries on with the account of Babel. Global-flood advocates generally assume the flood and Babel were separated by a vast time period. Yet there is no gap in Genesis between the flood and Babel.

How much time elapsed between the flood and Babel? If we take the genealogical text of Genesis 11 literally, as global-flood advocates uniformly demand elsewhere in Genesis, the time between the flood and the birth of Abraham amounts to less than 300 years. We get this time span by adding up the years in Genesis 11:

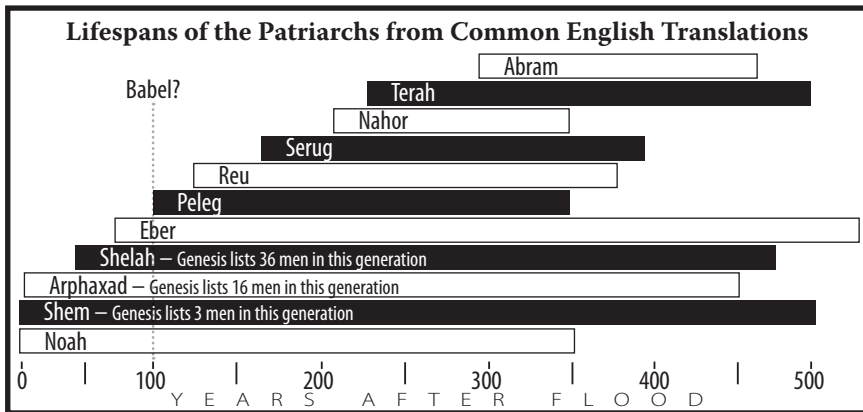
This is the account of Shem. Two years after the flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father of Arphaxad. ... When Arphaxad had lived 35 years, he became

the father of Shelah. ... When Shelah had lived 30 years, he became the father of Eber. ... When Eber had lived 34 years, he became the father of Peleg. ... When Peleg had lived 30 years, he became the father of Reu. ... When Reu had lived 32 years, he became the father of Serug. ... When Serug had lived 30 years, he became the father of Nahor. ... When Nahor had lived 29 years, he became the father of Terah. ... After Terah had lived 70 years, he became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. (Gen. 11:10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26 NIV)

Babel occurs somewhere during this period of time. Most young-earth creationists suggest the events of Babel occurred around the birth of Peleg because of the division spoken of in Genesis 10:25.⁷

Two sons were born to Eber: One was named Peleg, because in his time the earth was divided; his brother was named Joktan. (Gen. 10:25 NIV)

The chronology appears to be straightforward. Based on a plain *literal* reading, Peleg was born about 101 years after the flood and Abram (Abraham) was born about 292 years after the flood. The genealogy is shown in this graph:



One leading young-earth creationist, Ken Ham, defends a flood relatively close to the days of Abraham. He senses the implications of wandering from a plain-literal reading of the post-flood genealogies. When dealing with the suggestion of gaps in the genealogies of both Genesis 5 and 11 he claims:

This is not so. The language is clear that they are strict chronologies, especially because they give the age of the father at the birth of the next name in line. So the earth is only about 6,000 years old.⁸

This response is directed toward conservatives who, until young-earth creationism blossomed in the second half of the 20th century, had no problem with the idea that man has been around on planet Earth for more than a few thousand years. For example, J. Vernon McGee was hardly a theological liberal, yet he wrote:

I personally feel that we have a gap in the genealogy given here [Gen. 5]. We know that in the opening of the New Testament the genealogy that is given of the Lord Jesus Christ leaves out quite a few, and purposely so, because there is an attempt to give it in three equal segments. Certain ones are left out, but you will notice that it follows through accurately. I am sure this genealogy is accurate, but the important thing is that we may have a gap here that would account for the fact that man has been on this earth a great deal longer than we have supposed. This is not something I care to go into because it is quite an involved subject.⁹

Ken Ham denies that the genealogical listing in Genesis 5 and 11 have gaps. Ham does not seem to realize what this means for the chronology of the flood and Babel. His approach creates an unsolvable problem: time. If the flood destroyed absolutely all human life on planet Earth except the eight people of Noah's family, then how is it possible that there can be another huge civilization on earth within three generations of the flood? The common perception of Babel as a great civilization or repopulation of planet Earth to pre-flood levels is *impossible*, given human reproductive limits within that period of time. (This is roughly 100 years if Babel occurred at the birth of Peleg). Genesis lists sixty men in the generations before Peleg. Even if Shem, Japheth and Ham had more sons than are listed, at most, only about a hundred men were possible by the birth of Peleg. The common explanation of Babel as a colossal event involving a massive civilization after the flood does not fit with a global flood. There were not enough people on planet Earth.

Babel is usually presented as God's judgment for not spreading out over planet Earth after the flood. However, if we assume a global flood

and consider the small number of generations between the flood and Babel, we are left with some puzzling questions. Given a global flood, everyone involved in Babel was closely related. Was God angry because second cousins and various family members lived together?

Perhaps a better understanding is that God's command to Noah and his sons to "fill the earth [*erets*]" (Gen. 9:1) involved, not mere biological reproduction and dispersion, but an *evangelistic imperative* as well. If that *religious* dimension exists in God's command to Noah and his sons after the flood, then we can see a *spiritual* reason for God's anger and judgment upon Babel. The family of Noah failed in their mission to spread the covenant faith and true worship of God to the peoples and culture around them much as Israel later failed in her evangelistic mission to the nations and peoples around her (Deut. 4:6).

The story of Babel is better understood within a covenant context. Rather than Noah's posterity (the people of God) promoting the true worship of God in the culture around them as God commanded them, to "fill the earth [*erets*]" (Gen. 9:1), we now find them in the story of Babel engaging in the pagan religion common to ancient Mesopotamia. Is it possible that we see here an early outline of and similarity to the golden calf idolatry that Israel committed after their deliverance from Egypt? The Tower of Babel resembles a ziggurat which served as a temple in ancient Babylonian and Mesopotamian religion. These structures were designed to be a "stairway to heaven." The ultimate contrast to the story of Babel (man's city) is the story of the New Jerusalem (God's city). Those involved in Babel desired to build a city from earth to heaven. The Holy City in Revelation comes "down out of heaven from God" (Rev. 21:2 NIV). The comparison is clear in the context of the wider story of the Bible; God builds toward earth, for it is impossible for man to build to heaven.

The progeny of Noah had not remained true to the covenant faith of their forefather, Noah. *The story is about apostasy*. Through the folly of Nimrod, they corrupted themselves with the religious practices of the nations around them (which were not affected directly by the flood). This is what kindled God's anger and why he came down in judgment on Babel.

Regardless of how we understand the details regarding the judgment upon Babel, the issue of an inadequate population creates more problems for the global-flood view. Notice how close to the flood Nimrod lived, as well as what he was able to accomplish right after the flood.

This is the account of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons, who themselves had sons after the flood... The sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan. The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah and Sabteca. ... Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth... The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. (Gen. 10:1, 6-8, 10-12 NIV)

A plain and direct reading of the genealogical tables declares Nimrod the son of Cush who is the son of Ham, one of the three sons of Noah. *Nimrod was Noah's great-grandson*. Nimrod was involved in the construction of Babel. Yet after God thwarted that plan, Nimrod built *eight more cities*, creating an empire set against God. These details in Genesis raise difficult questions for those who believe in a universal flood. From where did all these people come if the flood was global? How is it physically possible for a great-grandson of Noah to build nine cities if the flood left only eight people on planet Earth? The next question is this. How did Nimrod thwart God's confusion-judgment? We would then need to assume that Nimrod's eight cities (Gen. 10:10-11) each had its own language and were built after Babel with no more than about a dozen men each. It seems that Nimrod the mighty was an exceptional linguist and personally overcame God's division! Where did Nimrod find all these people?

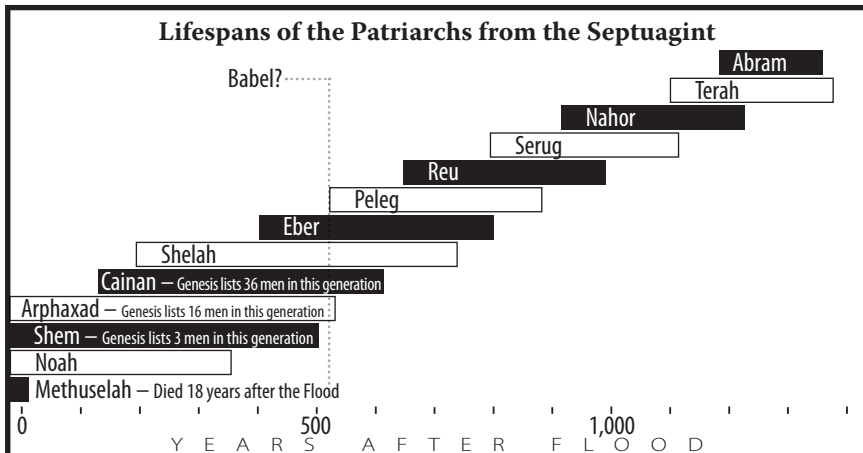
The details in Genesis should surprise those who believe in a global flood. When Abraham left Haran, about 367 years after the flood, according to a plain-literal reading of the genealogies, there were already numerous peoples with numerous national identities, some of whom had sold thousands of their own countrymen to Terah and Abram.¹⁰ Some of these servants in Abraham's household were brought from as far as 1000 miles away. Hagar came from Egypt (Gen. 16:1). Eliezer came from Damascus (Gen. 15:2).

Young-earth/global-flood advocates have yet to put together a story that explains all of these details in conformity with the natural flow of Genesis. They tend to take each piece of information in Genesis (e.g., the flood, Babel, the story of Abraham, Sodom's destruction) as if it has no bearing or direct relationship to the rest of the story. Global-flood advocates demand a literal interpretation in Genesis, yet when the text

is examined closely, on their own terms, it simply doesn't make sense. How can there be enough people around after a global flood to fit with what Genesis describes in the immediate post-flood world?

Global Flood Interpretation vs. the Septuagint

One way to mend this problem of time and population between the flood, Babel, and Abraham is to rely on the Septuagint rather than the Masoretic text which underlies most English Bibles. The Septuagint provides an extra 430 or so years and an extra generation between Noah and Peleg.¹¹ This would help alleviate some of the problem of time needed between the flood and Babel as a small civilization could possibly develop in that time. What makes this option unworkable for those who believe in a global flood is that the Septuagint places the flood *years* before Methuselah dies — a fatal problem for a global-flood view, or any view which argues that the flood killed all human beings except Noah.



This point alone causes most young-earth creationists to demonize the genealogical accounting in the Septuagint. The young-earth creationist organization *Answers in Genesis* (AiG) warns readers against using the Septuagint. The AiG website offers this response to the idea that the Septuagint gives the accurate chronology:

This is not so. The Septuagint chronologies are demonstrably inflated, and contain the (obvious) error that Methuselah lived 17 years after the Flood. The Masoretic Text (on which almost all English translations are based) preserves the correct chronology.¹²

Very few stop to consider that the Septuagint provides another confirmation for a local flood. Could it be that the Septuagint translators accepted a local flood that did not affect Methuselah? Those who believe in a global flood automatically assume the Septuagint should be dismissed rather than their global-flood doctrine. The irony is that the apostles used the Septuagint! Here is where the global view of the flood takes modern Christians: They must assume their position *even if it means rejecting a venerable ancient translation of the Old Testament*. Their standard for judging biblical *texts* is their global-flood *interpretation*!

When “Literalism” Goes Wrong

The bottom line is the Masoretic text creates a thorny difficulty: too little time between the flood and Babel. Although the Septuagint alleviates this problem slightly, it creates a different problem with the chronology of the flood and Methuselah.

The difficulties for young-earth creationists regarding the chronology of the flood and Babel do not end there. They must logically affirm a strange belief about Noah and Abraham if they stick to their plain-literal method. Genesis 9:28 (NIV) says, “After the flood Noah lived 350 years.” If the genealogies in Genesis 11:10-26 are meant to be understood literally, adding the years from the flood to the birth of Abraham we would find that Noah and Abraham were, at the end of Noah’s life, contemporaries. Noah lived longer after the flood than the entire gap between the flood and birth of Abraham!

Whitcomb and Morris, the authors who took flood geology to the evangelical world, acknowledge this curious conclusion when they write:

If the strict-chronological interpretation of Genesis 11 is correct, *all* the postdiluvian patriarchs, including Noah, would still have been living when Abraham was fifty years old...¹³

Whitcomb and Morris probably gave more thought to the issue of time between the flood and Babel than Ham. They sense the problem of having a huge civilization at Babel within about a hundred years after a universal flood as well as the oddity of Noah and Abraham living simultaneously. They struggled with the issue of chronology in a long appendix to *The Genesis Flood*. What is their solution to the problem of the short

time-span between the flood and Babel? They simply abandon a plain literal approach to the genealogical material in Genesis. They write:

The strict-chronology interpretation of Genesis 11 has been shown to be unnecessary for various reasons. Thus, it seems Biblically possible, or even probable, that the Flood occurred several millennia before Abraham.¹⁴

[T]he Flood may have occurred as much as three to five thousand years before Abraham.¹⁵

What Whitcomb and Morris claim above is that *Genesis does not provide a literal history*. But what do young-earth creationists say about those who find a “strict-chronology interpretation” unnecessary for Genesis 1? They make severe accusations against old-earth creationists who question a “strict-chronology interpretation” of Genesis 1. But if a “strict-chronology interpretation” is unnecessary in Genesis 11, might a “strict-chronology interpretation” likewise be unnecessary when we examine the days of Genesis 1? Like premillennial views of prophecy, Whitcomb and Morris’ literalism *only applies when it is convenient for their argument*.

Like all futurists who believe prophecy speaks of global events to come in our future, Whitcomb and Morris reject a *literal* reading of the near “time statements” we find all over New Testament prophetic texts. They also ignore a *literal* reading of swords, horses and ancient warfare we find mentioned throughout prophecy. Here is a great example of the *modus operandi* of dispensational premillennialism, whether in Genesis or in prophecy: When literalism makes nonsense out of the system, Whitcomb and Morris (and many others) simply abandon it.

The way Whitcomb and Morris handle the time-span between the flood, Babel, and Abraham pits them against Ken Ham and other leaders in the young-earth creationist movement. Apparently, some young-earth creationists handle Genesis more literally than others. Whitcomb and Morris offer this reasoning for not taking the genealogies literally:

If we accept 2167 B.C. as the year of Abram’s birth, the Flood must have occurred in the year 2459 B.C. and the judgment of the Tower of Babel between 2358 and 2119 B.C. (the lifetime of Peleg) according to a strict-chronology interpretation.

When we turn to the Genesis account of Abram's journeys, however, we discover the international scene to have been quite different from that suggested by the above-mentioned dates for the Flood and judgment of Babel. Abram is certainly not depicted as one of the early pioneers from the land of Shinar who migrated to western territories that were only beginning to be settled 200 years after the judgment of Babel. Quite to the contrary, the Bible implies that the world of Abram's day, with its civilizations and cities, was ancient already...¹⁶

This is a monumental admission by the fathers of modern young-earth creationism. The more obvious explanation they refuse to consider is that *the flood did not wipe out every human civilization on planet Earth*. That would explain why the civilizations and cities referenced in the biblical account of Abraham appeared ancient by the time of Abraham. They were!

The account of Babel either disproves a worldwide flood which must have taken place little more than a hundred years before Babel, or the account of Babel reveals the inconsistency of the plain-literal method at the heart of young-earth creationism. The Septuagint, if trustworthy, disproves a global flood outright. The Babel account creates tremendous problems for young-earth creationism.

Prehistoric Babel?

Many of the same problems apply to the way old-earth creationists handle Babel as well. For example, Hugh Ross has argued for an anthropologically universal flood which killed all mankind besides Noah's family, but did not destroy all animals and birds on planet Earth. This *partial-local* view requires the flood and Babel to be placed far back into prehistoric times. The logic is that both the flood and Babel must have occurred tens of thousands of years ago *before* human beings spread out over planet Earth. Ross explains:

This discovery supports a biblically and scientifically consistent hypothesis for humanity's spread. If God commanded Adam and Eve and their descendants to fill the earth about 40,000 years ago, the Bering land bridge would have made obedience possible... Let's compare this chronology with the present archeological and anthropological data. Some time before about 35,000 years

ago, humans and civilization sprang up in the Mesopotamian flood plain, centered in Babel. Roughly 33,000 years ago, humans began to spread out over Africa, Asia, Australia, and Europe.¹⁷

Ross places the Babel event around 33,000 years ago when humans began to spread out. His assumption of an anthropological universal flood means that, in his view, no dispersion of humanity could have taken place until Babel. This theory, based on a partial-local flood, mangles a literal interpretation of the Bible's genealogical accounting. It also mangles *every* accepted anthropological explanation held in modern science today: science that Ross tries to use to fit with Scripture.

As we explained in Chapter 8, Genesis references highly developed human civilization long *before* the flood. Genesis records developed farming and domesticated livestock (4:2ff), the practice of city-building (4:17), not to mention the technologies of musical instruments (4:21) and metalworking (4:22) between the creation of Adam and Eve and the flood. No credible anthropological research at this point would suggest any of these elements in early Genesis could date back more than 33,000 years. Ross' theory of the flood and Babel as prehistoric events makes neither biblical nor scientific sense.

The Biblical Solution and Fulfillment of Babel

All of these problems outlined above evaporate once we understand that the flood was local and involved a *covenant* context. God judged a *covenant* world with the flood. Viewing the flood event as a covenant judgment solves all of the problems outlined above no matter how the genealogical material is read.* If the flood account is limited to Noah's world and culture, there is no reason to be perplexed about the developed post-flood world the Bible assumes. Plenty of people lived beyond the range of the flood to explain Nimrod's many cities. A local flood also explains why Abraham's world looks the way it does shortly after the flood. It also has no problem with the Septuagint anomaly.

The same principles of covenant judgment we demonstrated in the flood apply equally to the account of Babel. Babel involves people who lived outside of the immediate locale where the flood took place, yet who hardened themselves against God's righteous judgment at the in-

* We will outline an alternative interpretive method for the life-spans found in early Genesis in Chapters 16.

stigation of Nimrod. Some of Noah's progeny (e.g., Nimrod) were also involved in the construction of Babel. Just as the flood took place in a covenant context, the account of Babel speaks of similar regional events in biblical Mesopotamia that do not apply to the entire globe or other continents.¹⁸ People who lived in other parts of planet Earth are simply beyond the purview of the biblical account of Babel. Babel relates to the region of Mesopotamia where Noah's family settled, just as preterists place the physical events spoken of in New Testament prophecy within the limited region of the Roman Empire, Judea, and Jerusalem.

This covenant view of Babel makes the story dovetail with the opening of Exodus. Can you see the parallels between the details we find in Exodus 1 and the story of Babel?

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, *who did not know Joseph*. And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; *come, let us deal shrewdly with them*, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land." Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. *And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses*. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel. So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in *brick*, and in all manner of service in the field. (Ex. 1:8-14 NKJV)

Note the similarities back to the story of Babel. (1) The new Pharaoh had forgotten Joseph, and by implication, the one true God, just as Nimrod forsook the faith of his forefather, Noah. (2) Pharaoh says "come, let us..." just as the people of Babel initiate their project by saying "Come, let us..." (Gen. 11:3-4). (3) Pharaoh engages the task of building "supply cities" to protect Egypt against any future famine, just as the design of Babel was to protect against any future flood. (4) Pharaoh's ostentatious building project involved making brick (c.f. Ex. 5), as did the attempt at Babel. (5) The Hebrews were being forced to build monuments to the name and glory of Pharaoh and Egypt rather than serve and worship Jehovah God.

The implication of Exodus 1 for the Hebrews, who knew their history and what happened at Babel, is plain. As God came down and judged

Babel causing their plan to fail, so God would come down and judge Egypt bringing an end to Pharaoh's plan against the Hebrews. The rest of the book of Exodus tells the story of how this came to pass. In fact, Exodus 14:24-25 says plainly that God came in judgment on the Egyptian army from the "cloud." The exodus is an echo of what happened at Babel, yet who thinks of the exodus as a global story?

We have more evidence for this covenant view of Babel when we examine the *theological* parallelism between the account of Babel and the events of Pentecost we found in Acts 2. God cursed Babel and confused the languages of the people scattering them over "the face of the earth." At Pentecost the curse is reversed as God's Spirit is poured out in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies about the "last days." Jews gathered in Jerusalem "from every nation under heaven." This refers to a particular local region, the known world of the Roman Empire.

In contrast to Babel where one language was confused, at Pentecost the languages "from every nation under heaven" become one in order to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. God's grace at Pentecost triumphs over God's curse at Babel. Once we understand that parallel in *covenant* history we should see both accounts in their proper contexts. It is inconsistent to demand that the languages of Babel demand a global or universal event across the entire planet, when it is clear the same type of language in Acts 2 speaks of events limited to the context of the Roman Empire. Also consider that the parallelism between Babel and Pentecost shows once again how the *apex* of biblical fulfillment is the first century.

Young-earth creationism's view of Babel does not do justice to the architectural details or intent we find in the biblical text. Babel was a defiant response to the flood; the people attempted to waterproof their tower. Furthermore, a global flood creates a severe problem of time between the flood and Babel. Where do all the people come from within so few generations after the flood? This under-population difficulty is made worse in light of the biblical detail about Nimrod's many cities. The close relationship between the flood and Babel in the biblical text cannot be explained by the common views of a global flood and worldwide Babel event.

The covenant judgment view of the flood and Babel also relieves the problems inherent in a partial-local view of the flood held by some old-earth creationists. There is no reason to place the flood and Babel tens of thousands of years into the past if the Bible does not require the flood to destroy all human beings on planet Earth besides Noah's family. Ironically, this unnecessary demand forces many of the same dilem-

mas and problems young-earth creationists face in the post-flood world upon old-earth, partial-local-flood advocates as well.

Local Implies Insignificance?

One objection that will be raised against a local or covenant view of the flood, Babel, and New Testament prophecy is that a limited view reduces the significance and spiritual meaning of God's acts in history. Some might ask, "How can the Christian faith relate to people on every continent of our globe if the Bible does not speak about global physical events with the flood or the coming of Christ? If these events were all local in physical detail, then why should anyone accept Christianity who lives beyond these biblical lands?"

The assumption behind this objection is that spiritual realities must be directly proportional to physical realities. The problem with the objection is that it limits spiritual reality to the size and majesty of *physical* events. Beware of the materialistic mindset which would claim that physical events that are limited have "less" spiritual significance while events that are worldwide have "more" spiritual significance. How would this line of thinking apply to the crucifixion of Christ? Author Gary DeMar offers a profound insight that shows the problem with thinking that local events imply insignificance:

You're a Christian who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. A Lord who was crucified locally. Locally! It happened in a local environment in a dingy part of the world that nobody noticed. But you and I are redeemed by what happened in the past, in a local event.¹⁹

Author Don Preston sums up the same issue well by saying:

Does an event have to be of universal scope, to be universally significant? In other words, does an event have to be geographically widespread, and widely known about, to be truly important?... You see, the geographical size, or even the scope of the knowledge of an event has no bearing on whether it is universally, spiritually significant. *Fewer people knew of the death of Jesus than knew of the destruction of Jerusalem!* The destruction of Jerusalem would have had a far, far wider impact, socially, economically, militarily, than the death of Jesus! Should we then argue that the fall of Jerusalem was more important than his death? Surely

not. Should we likewise depreciate the significance of the end of the Old Covenant age because folks in South America did not know it was taking place? Surely not.²⁰

If local implies insignificance, then what does that mean for our Christian faith?

The same reasoning applies to a local/covenantal view of the flood. It is a *gospel* story that happened within the experience of God's people. We should not shy away from this. On the contrary, we should glory in it. Our God always deals with man and accomplishes his plan of salvation *within the local historical context* of his people. God acts in our world as surely as he did in theirs. But it means more than that. It means that what God did in the lives and culture of Noah and the lives and culture of the early Christians is similar to what God does in our lives and in our culture today. God does not change. The best way to understand God's ways today is to understand his acts in redemptive history. Is there anything more practical than to understand rightly what God has done in the biblical story? After all, how practical is it to expect the great tribulation to happen soon when it actually happened nearly 2000 years ago?

Many Christians in our day insist that the flood, Babel and prophecy reference global events. Preterism introduces a key principle of covenant context that offers a coherent understanding of Noah's flood, the Tower of Babel and New Testament prophecy. Preterism may very well revolutionize the Genesis debate.

CHAPTER 11

GOD'S CURSE ON ADAM: THE PROBLEM



As we showed in Chapters 5 and 6 (“The Divide: 1830” and “Worlds Collide: Lyell vs. Darby”), dispensational premillennialism is far more than abstract theology. Although it took years for the key ideas John Nelson Darby introduced to develop into a comprehensive worldview, they did eventually shape the way Christians thought about the world. Dispensationalism provided a framework for planet Earth’s *history*. Author Mark Noll captures the issue well:

[Young-earth] Creationism could, in fact, be called scientific dispensationalism, for creation scientists carry the same attitude toward catastrophe and the sharp break between eras into their science that dispensationalists see in the Scriptures.¹

Those involved in the Genesis debate should not overlook the fact that dispensationalism created a theological view of planet Earth’s natural history – both past and future. If that conception of history is wrong, then the theology which underlies it is also wrong. Young-earth creationists, most of whom remain dispensational futurists, understand this; the connection between their dispensational theology and its corresponding view of earth history is one explanation for their strong devotion to young-earth creationism. For most dispensationalists, there is much more at stake in the debate than merely the scope of Noah’s flood. Their entire view of earth’s history and dispensationalism hangs in the balance. If young-earth creationism is false, so is dispensationalism.

The Flood and Death before the Fall

Chapters 7 through 10 showed how the Bible teaches a local flood, not a global flood. This chapter challenges the belief that all biological

death in our experience is a *result* of God's curse at the fall of Adam. Young-earth creationism claims that there was no biological death in God's original good creation. In other words, all biological death among breath-based life is the result of sin, and sin entered the world through Adam's disobedience.²

John Whitcomb, Jr. and Henry Morris explain the connection between their belief about the fall and global-flood doctrine:

But there is a much closer connection between the Biblical doctrines of the Fall and the Flood than the mere fact that neither can be harmonized with uniformitarian views of the earth's history. The really important connection between them consists in the explanation which a universal Flood provides for the laying down of the fossiliferous strata *since* the time of Adam... To put the issue into its sharpest delineations, a literal interpretation of the Fall demands as its corollary a thorough-going Biblical catastrophism; and the doctrine of the Flood can be fully understood only in light of the Fall and Edenic curse.³

Whitcomb and Morris note rightly that the belief is a result of a particular way of reading Genesis, what they claim is a "literal" interpretation of the fall. This is one key presupposition young-earth creationists bring to the Genesis debate. They believe that the death and violence we witness in the fossil record must have taken place *after* the creation and fall of Adam a few thousand years ago. This requires the entire fossil record to be the result of some great catastrophic event which lies between Adam and now – the flood. The doctrine of the global flood and the doctrine of no biological death before the fall are logically related.

Young-earth creationism's *biological* view of the curse requires that Adam's fall resulted in a change in the physical laws governing planet Earth. In other words, the physical world we experience today is *not* what God originally created. Author Carl Wieland, a leading young-earth creationist in Australia, puts it this way:

Running right through the entire Bible... is the theme that the God who consistently reveals himself therein made a *good* world (no death, struggle, violence, cruelty, or bloodshed). This entire universe has been *cursed* by God (Gen. 3, Rom. 8) as a consequence of the rebellion (sin) of the first man, Adam, against his Maker.⁴

Whitcomb and Morris explain further the implications of their interpretation of the fall for modern young-earth creationism:

Uniformitarian paleontology... assumes that uncounted billions of animals had experienced natural or violent deaths before the Fall of Adam...

But how can such an interpretation of the history of the animal kingdom be reconciled with the early chapters of Genesis? Does the Book of Genesis, honestly studied in light of the New Testament, allow for a reign of tooth and claw and death and destruction before the Fall of Adam? If not, we have further compelling reasons for questioning the uniformitarian scheme of reading the rocks and at the same time strong encouragement for finding in the great Genesis Flood the true explanation for fossil formations in the crust of our planet.⁵

That is the key reason why young-earth creationism rejects modern geology. No one denies that the fossil record documents physical life and death as we experience it today. The rub comes when young-earth creationists reject the *possibility* that physical death could have taken place *at any time* before the fall of Adam. They teach that the Bible does not allow biological death before the fall.

Old-earth creationists, who accept the geological record as pre-dating Adam, necessarily have a different view of the fall recorded in Genesis. By accepting the fossil record as ancient, old-earth creationists imply that the fall *had no bearing on biological life and death in God's original creation*. They suggest the physical world we witness today is the same world God originally created – God's "very good" creation. Viewed this way, an ancient fossil record would disprove the young-earth *biological* interpretation of the fall and curse.

The Dispensational View of Earth's History

As mentioned above, Whitcomb and Morris admit their approach to earth's history is based on a particular *method* of interpreting Genesis:

[T]he student of Scripture must make an all-important choice between authorities; for uniformitarian theories of paleontology cannot long survive in an atmosphere of *consistent Biblical hermeneutics and exegesis* [emphasis ours].⁶

Literalism explains why young-earth creationists see great *physical* change between the pre- and post-fall worlds. Before the fall, animals talked. Snakes had legs. Animals never ate the flesh of another animal. After the fall, animals no longer possessed the capacity to speak. Snakes lost their legs. Carnivorous animals gave up their vegetarian habits. Thorns and thistles sprung up anew all over planet Earth. These transformations, we are told by young-earth creationism, are the result of the curse, which is to say once more that after the fall, the physical creation became something radically *different* from what it was before the fall.

But that is not the only great discontinuity young-earth creationism teaches about our past. It also teaches the flood event resulted in great physical changes for planet Earth and biological life as well. This drastic change in the physical world matches the onset of the “Noahic” dispensation in dispensational theology.

One of the biblical evidences offered to support this second radical change is the long life-spans in Genesis which, we are told, gradually become shorter after the flood. Even non-dispensational theologians fall into a dispensational view of history as a natural result of their unquestioned “literalism” on this point. James Jordan gives a representative example:

Clearly things were different during the first two thousand years of human history in one respect at least: People lived much longer lives.⁷

Speculation of a great change regarding human life-spans in history appears frequently in the dispensational, young-earth ideology which Jordan claims convinced him as a young collegiate:

I became convinced that Whitcomb was right and became an avid follower of the “scientific creationism” advocated by Henry Morris and his associates.⁸

Young-earth theologians like Jordan imply that the environment on planet Earth changed drastically after the flood, reducing these amazing ages we find in early Genesis. They claim their *literal* reading of the long life-spans in Genesis proves the pre-flood world cannot be the same as *our world*.

These great changes in world history do not merely apply to past dispensations. For dispensationalists, who have always made up the bulk of young-earth creationism since the days of Ellen G. White, these

great changes in the past are *symmetrical to great physical changes coming in our future*. Morris claims the coming “millennial” dispensation will be inaugurated by the coming of Christ. That time period will bear direct resemblance to the pre-flood world. Morris explains:

People will live hundreds of years again, just as their counterparts did in the antediluvian period...⁹

Similarly, in the millennium, life spans will be long again, appetites will be herbivorous again, rains will be gentle again, storms will be absent again, and the whole world will be habitable again.¹⁰

This change in the physical world for the millennium not only relates to human life and existence, it involves the entire planet. Even the topography gets *changed back* to the pre-flood world:

For the millennial period, “every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain” (Isaiah 40:4). Apparently, the topography of the earth’s surface in the millennium will be quite similar to that in the world before the flood.¹¹

One key in order to understand this odd conclusion is to realize that Morris reads Isaiah the prophet the same way he reads early Genesis. Isaiah also mentions long life-spans in Isaiah 65:20. Strangely, Jordan takes the long life-spans literally in early Genesis, but does *not* take them literally in Isaiah 65:20. Dispensationalists like Morris take both of these instances of long life-spans literally. But notice that in both early Genesis and Isaiah, Morris assumes the Bible communicates about planet Earth in plain literal, geo-physical detail.

Since the pre-fall world had no ice caps or high mountains, they, too, must vanish one day:

The earth itself will be restored largely in the millennium to its antediluvian beauty. In the original “very good” creation, there were no uninhabitable deserts or ice caps or high mountains. The seas were relatively narrow and shallow, all inter-connected and more or less uniformly distributed among the earth’s land surfaces, thus assuring a relatively equable humidity everywhere.¹²

Morris suggests that this change will be brought about *through the upheavals of the supposed world-wide future great tribulation*. Notice the parallel Morris draws between the flood and the great tribulation:

It would seem, therefore, that if millennial conditions are going to be like those of the flood, then somehow the effects of the flood have to be essentially reversed... Similarly the present mountains must be cut down and all the earth's topography made gentle again. All of this would seem to be impossible, except for God, who created it all to begin with. Surprisingly, many of the physical phenomena described as taking place during the tribulation period could produce these very results.¹³

Note how Morris reads the description of prophetic events in the New Testament in the same manner as he reads the description of events in Genesis. His expectation for a great physical change to come in the future, during the great tribulation, is born out of his belief concerning great physical changes described in Genesis. He reads both ends of the Bible according to the same method.

The ultimate change taught by young-earth creationism is the coming end of our "heavens and earth." God's curse – the ostensible cause of biological death in the first place – is finally purged from the universe by fire at the end:

Since the Curse now permeates the very elements of the earth, its removal requires purging the elements. This, indeed, is what will happen: "The elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up... all these things shall be dissolved" (2 Peter 3:10,11)... Thus will the new earth and its inhabitants at last be restored to the conditions of the Edenic earth...¹⁴

Morris views the "elements" in 2 Peter 3 as a scientific reference. He "sees" the periodic table rather than the Law of Moses. He "sees" planet Earth, not the new covenant. Back in Chapter 4 we showed how the Greek word for elements in this passage is *stoichion* and refers to the Law in every other use in the New Testament. This is a good example of how Morris' "literalism" leads him away from the common biblical use and contextual meaning of terms and concepts in both prophecy and creation.

The root of all this is dispensational theology. The sharp breaks in dispensations mark the sharp breaks in earth's physical history, both past and future. What is strange is how this dispensational view of earth history is promoted dogmatically by many who are not generally recognized as dispensationalists. Consider this example offered by authors J. Ligon Duncan and David Hall, both public defenders of covenant theology and Presbyterianism:

[T]he post-Flood world seems to have changed in basic ways from the pre-Flood world, thus raising significant questions about assumptions of uniformity. The Fall of Adam is no small barrier either.¹⁵

That brief example gives a powerful demonstration of how dispensational thinking has grown to dominate the American scene. Their view of earth's history is shaped and formed entirely by Morris' dispensationalism and the visions of Ellen G. White.

The Evolutionism in Young-earth Creationism

These alleged sharp breaks in earth history create surprising dilemmas for young-earth creationists. The first dilemma is that flood catastrophism inevitably makes *hyper-evolution* an essential part of young-earth creationism. If the flood radically altered the earth's physical climate and topography, then *every* animal that stepped off the ark and *every* plant on the new earth would have to evolve into this new world or die. Old-earth creationist authors Hugh Ross and Gleason Archer point out this problem:

Thus, young-earth creationists propose an efficiency of natural biological speciation greater than the most optimistic Darwinist has ever dared to suggest.¹⁶

To help better understand the problem, consider polar bears and penguins. If arctic regions did not exist before the flood, then from where do these specially adapted animals come? There is no other conclusion for young-earth creationism than that life evolved in arctic regions since the time of Noah. But how, exactly, did that happen after the supposed global flood? Did some bear-like ancestor from the ark just have a hankering for this new cold climate and migrate into the new arctic region, adapting rapidly as it trudged north? Are penguins

descendants of some large bird species which found swimming in icy waters a more efficient use of their wings?

This is radical evolutionism, pure and simple. And it is strange, too, because there is no conceivable reason for these animals to go to these harsh environments in the first place. What environmental factor would lead penguins to go to a place where there is virtually no light for a considerable part of the year and where temperatures regularly fall to 50 degrees below zero? Did penguins evolve after the flood to thrive in these extreme Antarctic conditions? And how long would it take for a penguin to migrate to Antarctica from the landing point of the ark somewhere in the Middle East? Wouldn't it have to go through central Africa (or a tropical ocean) to get there? The penguin has to evolve from a pre-flood environment into a post-flood, tropical environment at the equator, back to a temperate climate, and then into a polar environment on its long march south after the flood. Few young-earth creationists really think about these kinds of conclusions implicit in their global flood view.

We could multiply the problems for every environment that young-earth creationism teaches did not exist before the fall. If there were no deserts before the flood, then from where did the plants and animals specific to these environments come? If pre-flood, non-desert plants can – indeed did – produce the prolific spectrum of post-flood cacti species we witness today, would not cacti be a marvelous demonstration of extreme evolution? The same question applies to water-conserving animals such as mice and camels. If deserts did not exist before the flood, then *all post-flood desert life must have evolved there extremely fast*, especially considering the fact that camels have been around for thousands of years. Indeed, they are mentioned specifically in Genesis 12:16, less than 400 years (according to a literal reading of the genealogies) after the flood!¹⁷

What is truly remarkable is that young-earth creationists rely on Darwin's research and general evolution theory to argue the necessary evolutionary aftermath of a global flood. Young-earth creationist Jonathan Sarfati explains:

The biblical creation/Fall/Flood/migration model would also predict rapid formation of new varieties and even species. This is because all the modern varieties of land vertebrates must have descended from comparatively few animals that disembarked from the ark only around 4,500 years ago. In contrast, Darwin thought that this process

would normally take eons. It turns out that the very evidence claimed by evolutionists to support their theory supports the biblical model.¹⁸

In other words, evolution *really* proves young-earth creationism! Darwin had it all wrong! Evolution actually happens *faster* than he ever thought possible. Consider the implication. The global flood doctrine *proves evolution really did happen*. While it is strange that young-earth creationists do not see a problem with this, evolutionary atheists are very aware of the irony from the earliest days of flood geology:

[George McCready] Price was not that bothered by evolution as such. Geology and the flood were what really counted to explain the diversity of species we see today. He was prepared to allow a fair amount of organic change after the animals came out of the Ark, since clearly Noah did not have room to take two specimens of every living kind.¹⁹

Henry Morris made it clear that, in contrast to local flood advocates, his view holds key elements in common with modern evolutionary theory:

[T]he evangelical advocates of a local Flood... claim that most of these animals were probably created in the ecological niches where they are now found... An unusual feature of this division of opinion is that, in certain respects, most advocates of a universal Flood join the evolutionists in contending for the migration of animals from distant areas, as opposed to the theory of a special creation of animals in their *present* (postdiluvian) ecological zones.²⁰

Would it not be easier to say that the geological column is the material record of God's creation of life? Remember, the oodles of missing links that Darwin predicted have not appeared in the fossil record. Yet young-earth creationism demands a great evolutionary chain of life from the animals on the ark to all the animals we have today. They teach it all happened virtually overnight. This is quite a dilemma. Young-earth creationists cannot dismiss evolution by means of natural selection because that would torpedo their own theory. The irony of it all is amazing.

Every unique post-flood environment creates its own evolutionary challenge for the young-earth creationism. Life at high elevations (e.g.,

marmots and mountain goats) must have evolved there since, ostensibly, there were no high mountains before the flood.²¹ The same applies to deep sea ocean life since the ocean lowered to its current depths after the flood. What made all current life in these locations migrate to these harsh environments after the flood? The clear implication of young-earth creationism is that God did not create the life we witness today. It has all evolved as a result of the flood. *The global flood is young-earth creationism's Big Bang theory.*

On a scientific level, the ultimate dilemma of the global flood paradigm is this: The more catastrophism one demands in order to explain the observed geological evidence, the more one must embrace radical biological evolution across planet Earth after the flood. Young-earth creationism is in the unenviable position of embracing hyper-evolution in order to defend against Darwinian naturalistic evolution.²²

Young-earth Creationism vs. Intelligent Design

The very same problem is doubled if you consider similar physiological changes at the time of the fall. If Adam's fall caused a radical change in biological life, then we are two steps removed from God's original creation.

This first break in earth history introduces another dilemma for young-earth creationism. The doctrine of no biological death before the fall undermines the Intelligent Design argument for a Creator. Intelligent Design proponents assume that the biology we witness today is precisely what it is *because God created it that way*. The remarkable complexity, design, and information work perfectly in *this* world. They argue biological life shows evidence of design and perfect function because God created it that way *from the beginning*. We see design everywhere we look. *Everything* is fine-tuned for the miracle of life. This reality implies that significant evolutionary leaps are biologically impossible, whether they be gradual or speedy. Many of the Intelligent Design arguments apply to young-earth creationism's hyper-evolution as surely as they apply to atheistic evolution!

Young-earth creationists are now beginning to view the Intelligent Design argument for creation as a threat to their views. One young-earth creationist speaker, Georgia Purdom, faults the Intelligent Design movement for not recognizing that "because of the Fall there is now a cursed design."²³ She suggests that the perfect design for life scientists have uncovered in microbiology cannot be an argument for creation because the code is cursed! According to the young-earth system, God

did not make the physical world the way it is today. They believe the *curse* explains what the world is today, not God.²⁴

Young-earth creationism raises a similar complaint about modern discoveries in astronomy which highlight a plethora of design features on a macro scale. The problem? The same science which reveals these fine-tuned design features also proclaims an extremely *old* universe. Young-earth creationism teaches that the Bible says this age is not possible, therefore, they claim what astronomers see is mere illusion. Young-earth author Gary North offers this explanation:

The seeming age of the stars is an illusion. The events that we seem to be observing, such as novas (exploding stars), did not take place billions of years ago. If they did take place, they took place recently... if the speed of light has been constant since the creation of the earth, then the flashes of light which we explain as exploding stars are in no way related to actual historical events like explosions, unless the universe is relatively small.²⁵

We will come back to this “illusory” view of creation at the end of this chapter, but we note here that this “illusion” which modern astronomy “sees” is actually a powerful argument *for* creation. Hugh Ross and Gleason Archer explain that young-earth creationists,

pay a huge price when they insist that the natural record astronomers observe may have no bearing on reality. They toss out all the divine design evidence astronomers have discovered in nature’s record. A young-earth interpretation of Scripture demands the rejection of what secular scholars acknowledge as the strongest evidence for the biblical God, evidence indicating a transcendent Cause of the universe and of exquisite design for physical life.²⁶

Young-earth creationism’s insistence on (1) a young earth, (2) no biological death before the Adamic curse, and (3) changes in our physical world at both the fall and the flood are not compatible with the Intelligent Design movement.

These doctrines combine to lead young-earth creationism to several bizarre situations. First, they force young-earth creationists to argue in favor of hyper-evolution. Second, they set young-earth creationism against the most powerful argument for divine creation in science today. Young-earth creationism stabs Intelligent Design in the back, even

while the Intelligent Design movement stands against atheism, materialism, and naturalistic evolutionism on the scientists’ own turf. Surely, there is a better approach.

Old Earth Creationism: Partial Dispensationalism?

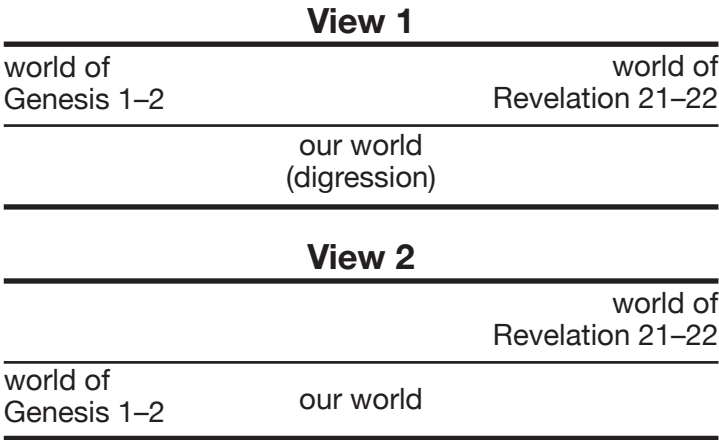
Old-earth creationists read Genesis differently than their rivals. They claim that the fossil record is legitimate and tells a real story of planet Earth’s ancient history. David Snoke explains:

The issue that seems to always give pause is the objection that animals could not have died before Adam and Eve sinned. Clearly, any theory of an old earth must involve animal death before Adam and Eve. The whole point of an old-earth view is to say that things are as they appear, and the earth is full of fossils and fossil matter such as coral and limestone.²⁷

This claim has tremendous theological implications. *Old-earth creationism implies that the fall did not affect the physical economy of physical life on earth.* That is, the effects of Adam’s fall relate to the realm of *human* experience. The curse is anthropocentric, or man-centered.

Snoke explains the point of controversy by presenting his readers a graph which we have reproduced below:

This brings us to an important interpretive debate. There are two different models of the creation, fall, and new creation, as illustrated below:²⁸



Notice on the graph that young-earth creationism's two main radical breaks in natural history are represented in View 1. View 2 is representative of old-earth creationism. In the old-earth view, there is no essential difference between the physical world of Genesis 1-2 and "our world." Yet, there is a radical change from "our world" to the "world of Revelation 21-22."

The significant point is that old-earth creationists, like Snoke, claim that Adam's sin did not affect the natural economy of life on earth. Physical life and death with which we are familiar has been going on for millions of years. Hugh Ross presents the same idea this way:

While the sin we human beings commit causes us all naturally to react negatively to decay, work, physical death, pain, and suffering, and while ultimately all this is somehow tied into God's plan... there is nothing in the Scripture that compels us to conclude that none of these entities existed before Adam's first act of rebellion against God. On the other hand, God's revelation through nature provides overwhelming evidence that all these aspects did exist for a long time period previous to God's creating Adam.²⁹

Both Ross and Snoke claim that a time is coming when God will dispose of "our world." They see this promised in Revelation 21-22:

According to Revelation 21, once God permanently conquers evil, this present universe will be replaced by a brand-new one.³⁰

There is no doubt that the language of utter, revolutionary change is used to describe the new heaven and new earth in Revelation 21-22.³¹

Note how both of these authors have abandoned the anthropocentric view of the curse they maintain in Genesis! If the curse did not affect the natural economy of God's "good creation" then why would God need to remove our physical universe in order to remove the curse through redemption?

This view is inconsistent because it assumes that the curse impacted mankind, but did not change the physical world. Nevertheless, they teach final redemption *requires* the creation of an entirely new physical universe. What Snoke and Ross present is, in fact, a strange version of partial dispensationalism. They argue *against* a radical change in the

physical world in the past in regard to the fall, and, at the same time, they argue *for* a radical change in the physical world sometime in the future. They promote a dispensational view of the future, but deny a dispensational view of the past.

David Snoke seems to sense the inconsistency of modern old-earth creationist views. In trying to justify the inconsistency, he theorizes that there is something wrong with humanity since creation! He explains:

In my view, then, humanity has been “unborn” since the beginning.³²

Snoke goes even further by claiming God’s ultimate purpose for man has no correlation with the original creation:

[T]he original creation had this kind of temporariness, or emptiness, because it was designed as a place of probation, not as the permanent home of mankind.³³

Snoke does not believe, as do young-earth creationists, that the curse is “inside” the physical creation. Yet like them, he still believes the original creation – God’s *good* creation – involved “emptiness.” Snoke implies that the original creation was deficient from day one. Man is “unborn” from the beginning.

One wonders how, in Snoke’s view, God could have called all that he made “very good,” for Snoke claims we must wait for a new physical universe to come in the future. Again, what biblical support does Snoke offer?

The second coming and the final judgment will entail a complete re-creation of the universe and all physical laws.

Unlike the supposed re-creations that are claimed to have occurred after the fall and the flood, a complete, dramatic change in the physical universe at the new creation is clearly taught in Scripture. Some have argued that the descriptions of Revelation 1-19 represent events that occur in history in this world, but the description of Revelation 21-22 leaves no room for any interpretation except an entirely new creation.³⁴

Snoke claims Revelation 21 and 22 reference heaven.³⁵ But what do we find in these passages? Revelation 21 speaks about some who will be God’s people with whom he dwells (21:3). There we find a free offer, to

all those willing, to drink from the water of life (21:6). Jesus spoke with the woman at the well about the water of eternal life in John 4:10-14. Revelation 21 also speaks about people *becoming* “sons of God” (21:7). Do people *become* sons of God in heaven? Actually, Paul claimed believers *are* “sons of God” in Galatians 3:26.

Revelation 21 also talks about the gates of the city being open and the “glory and honor of the nations” being brought into the city:

The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. (Rev. 21:24-26 NIV)

But are there nations in heaven? And if this is heaven, then why do the gates remain open to receive the glory and honor of the nations? Is this glory and honor coming from outside heaven somewhere?

The situation becomes even stranger when we look closely at Revelation 22 which says:

In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the *healing of the nations*. (Rev. 22:2 NKJV)

Remember that Snoke claims this is heaven. Yet this tree bears fruit every month to provide “healing of the nations” What needs healing in heaven? A very good argument can be made that the world of Revelation 21-22 is “our world,” where the gospel of Jesus Christ makes sinners whole again. The gates are open because people are coming in, but this fact shows that Revelation 21-22 is not a depiction of heaven. This is where people become Christians who have God dwelling in them as they live with God “in Christ.” It is Jesus Christ that takes the darkness away from all who believe – forever.

Snoke’s expectation of a coming new physical universe implies that not only did God’s original good creation involve “emptiness,” but that the coming new physical creation he labels “heaven” involves the presence of *sickness*. It’s too bad heaven is so messed up! Not only does God not get it right the first time, but the “second” physical creation has problems as well. All of these issues apply equally to Hugh Ross and other old-earth futurists.

All Roads Lead to Gnosticism

One recurring heresy in Church history is known as Gnosticism. Gnosticism comes from the Greek word *gnosis* or “knowledge” in English. The original Gnostics taught that salvation involved attaining “special knowledge” about God or the universe. The Gnostics believed this special knowledge brought about spiritual enlightenment that enabled escape from this world.

Gnosticism is a radically dualist view of reality where physical reality is completely separate from spiritual reality. Because “salvation” in the Gnostic view has to do with immaterial things such as *gnosis*, Gnostics had a negative view of physical reality and God’s creation. Ultimately, the physical “stuff” of the universe is dirty and irrelevant. They claimed “salvation” involves escaping from the physical world, which is the source of corruption, into the spiritual realm, which is pure and eternal. This belief drove the original Gnostics to deny the incarnation, for, in their thinking, it was impossible for God to take on physical flesh. God could not “dirty” himself in such a way, so they claimed that Jesus was merely a man and was not God in any way.

The sad reality is that both common views of creationism are ultimately indistinguishable from Gnosticism. *Both views deny the goodness of God’s physical creation and teach that God must replace it with a new universe in the future.* Both views affirm that ultimate salvation is, essentially, escape from our present physical world.

Young-earth Creationist Gnosticism

Young-earth creationism teaches that the physical world is cursed. “The Curse now permeates the very elements of the earth,” according to Morris.³⁶ This implies that, as a result of the fall, the physical world is *bad*. Young-earth creationists teach that God’s creation is “dirty” and the solution for Morris and other dispensationalists is to escape to a spiritual realm where life is radically different than it is here. They call this escape the “rapture.”

Young-earth creationist doctrine also has terrible implications for a Christian worldview. If this physical world is cursed and inherently corrupted, then there can be little incentive to maintain our environment for the long-term. The same view has negative implications for a Christian view of culture (like the scientific disciplines and the arts). The situation becomes even more dangerous when Christians’ actions reflect the belief that the “end of the world” is right around the corner,

when God destroys this physical universe anyway. As the famous dispensational radio preacher, J. Vernon McGee, proclaimed, "You don't polish brass on a sinking ship."

All of this bears a striking resemblance to Gnosticism which taught that the physical world is inherently evil and true salvation involves escape from it. But what if futurism is dead wrong? If futurism is a mistaken view of prophecy, then would not this negativism become a self-fulfilling prophecy? These negative beliefs about the world and the future could lead to a downward spiral in culture, which then becomes another argument that the "end of the world" is even nearer – this time for sure!

Consider that Gary North and many other young-earth creationists also teach that "the seeming age of the stars is an illusion."³⁷ This, too, sounds remarkably like the Gnostics who dismissed the physical world – God's good creation – as illusory.

According to young-earth creationism's worldview, one wonders how Jesus Christ, God himself, could become flesh. If the curse permeates the very elements of the universe, then we have quite a problem for the incarnation. Did Jesus become cursed flesh? How could he live a perfect and holy life as God's atoning sacrifice if the physical world, of which he became a part, is itself cursed and inherently corrupt?

One of the many things that the Christian doctrine of the incarnation shows us is the perfection of Jesus Christ is possible in God's physical world. Many other holy and righteous men in biblical history also demonstrate to us that man's problem has *nothing* to do with the created order; the problem is sin which resides in the human heart. The curse related to sin is not inherent in the elements of the physical world; the curse has to do with human beings and their *covenant relationship* to God. That is why believers can be saved, right here and now, in *this* world. The problem mankind has is sin, and God has taken care of that for those who believe. He doesn't have to throw away the physical universe in order to do that. Jesus did it on the cross with flesh, blood, bone, wood, thorns and nails – the physical stuff of God's good creation. The proof of the completed work of salvation was the parousia (coming in glory) that happened when and how Jesus and the apostles promised it would – in AD 70.

Old-earth Creationist Gnosticism

We agree with old-earth creationism's general view of planet Earth's *past* history. Old-earth creationists rightly see that the fall had to do

with God's *covenant relationship* with man. David Snoke is correct when he writes:

The concept of "spiritual death" is common in Scripture. The Bible often contrasts the dead heart with the living heart (Ezek. 11:19, 36:26). Jesus talks of people as "dead" though they are physically alive (Matt. 8:22), as does Paul (Eph. 2:1). This kind of death is unique to humans. Only humans have the image of God.³⁸

This is very important for one who believes that biological death existed in the creation before the fall. He speaks for most old-earth creationists when he highlights the anthropocentric nature of the curse:

There *is* something wrong with creation. But what is wrong is not the fact that animals die or trees decay. What is wrong is that the king of creation, the race of Adam, has abdicated his role.³⁹

If this is true, though, why does the same reasoning not apply to redemption? Why must redemption require the creation of a completely new physical universe? Snoke gets very close to applying the principle toward the future and almost avoids the dispensational notion of a radical change in the physical world some time in the future:

Jesus undoes the work of Adam by bringing life where Adam brought death. How does Jesus do this? Does he give eternal life to all the animals? There is nothing in Scripture to warrant such a belief, much as we might like to say that "all dogs go to heaven." No – Jesus brings spiritual life to humans right away, as Adam brought spiritual death right away...⁴⁰

So very close. Yet Snoke's interpretation of Revelation 21-22 maintains inexplicably a coming physical change in the universe. Realize what this means. It means that God's good creation, which was not physically altered at the fall, *must be thrown away*. He implies that there is something *wrong* with God's good creation, "our world," which he agrees has *not* been altered because of the curse! The original creation had this kind of "temporariness," or "emptiness" according to Snoke. Man is "unborn" from the beginning.⁴¹ This appears Gnostic. The created world is simply *not* good – nor has it ever been.

The answer to the latent Gnosticism inherent in both views of creation is old-earth preterism. We expect the reader to have many questions at this point about the fall and what the Bible says about redemption in places like Revelation 21-22. We devote the next chapter to a positive explanation of a biblically consistent view of death, the curse, and redemption that wars against Gnosticism at every point, as should the true Christian faith.

CHAPTER 12



GOD'S CURSE ON ADAM: THE SOLUTION

In the last chapter we presented author David Snoke's graph which represents two common views of earth history. View 1 represents young-earth creationism. View 2 represents old-earth creationism:

View 1

world of Genesis 1–2	world of Revelation 21–22
our world (digression)	

View 2

	world of Revelation 21–22
world of Genesis 1–2	our world

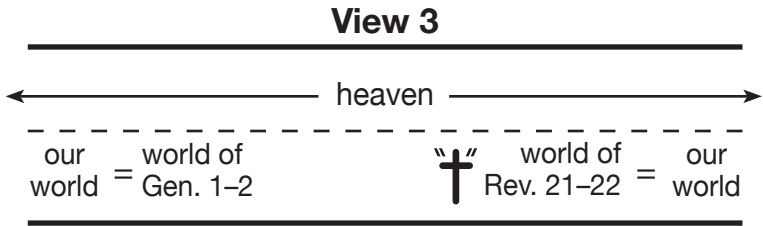
We have noted how both views are inherently dispensational. These two views “see” radical breaks in earth’s natural history. Young-earth creationism teaches these radical changes in both the past and future. Old-earth creationism, which generally assumes a futurist view of the coming of Christ by default, teaches a great break in planet Earth’s history only in the future. Both views foster an essential Gnostic view of God’s creation.

Our charge may seem extreme at first glance, but we have explained in Chapter 11 how young-earth creationism assumes that the physical

creation is cursed. Because of the Adamic curse, God’s good creation is no longer so, and will become good again only when the elements of “heaven and earth” are purged by fire.

Like its rival, old-earth futurism leads to an essential Gnosticism as well. This system claims that God’s good creation was not altered physically in any substantial way by Adam’s fall and the curse. Although our world is the same one God pronounced “very good,” old-earth futurism teaches that God will destroy the current universe and replace it with a new one with radically different physical laws. In other words, our world involves an “emptiness” or deficiency making it unsuitable for God’s purpose for humanity *from creation*. Humanity is, in David Snoke’s words, “unborn” from the beginning – even *before* the fall.

The solution we offer in place of these two defective views is an entirely different conception of earth history. Our view of planet Earth’s natural history is presented in the graph below:



Notice that View 3 shows no radical break or change in the physical world during earth’s history. The original physical laws God created to govern our universe are “very good.” God’s plan of redemption involves the removal of the *curse*, not the good creation.

The Biblical View of Heaven

An additional problem with both View 1 and View 2 diagrammed above is their concept of heaven. Both views imply that heaven is a “bookend” to history. Young-earth creationism has two bookends: heaven on earth both before the fall and at the end of history. This is somewhat consistent, but creates problems. Old-earth futurists have only one bookend: our world attains heaven only at the end of history. Authors Hugh Ross and Gleason Archer operate on this bookend view of heaven (and end up denigrating the created world) when they write:

God is preparing to move us into a far superior realm, the new creation.¹

Regardless of their differences about the past, both modern views of creation rely on a bookend approach to heaven. However, the Bible clearly teaches that heaven is not a bookend to history in any way. Heaven existed before the creation of the physical world and, unlike our world, is eternal. This is represented by the arrows in the upper half of View 3. Heaven runs concurrently with history, interacting with our world in various ways and at various times. Heaven is not a far off place separated from “here.” Relationally, it is, in fact, close to “here.”

There are many biblical examples which illustrate our diagram. Jacob dreamed of a ladder from earth to heaven with angels ascending and descending (Gen. 28:10-15).² God sometimes opens the eyes of humans to “see” heaven in a unique way. Elisha’s servant’s eyes were opened and he saw chariots of fire (2 Kings 6:17). The shepherds watching their fields by night saw an angel and a “heavenly host” which appeared to them and then returned to heaven (Luke 2:9-15). The transfiguration was an event where mortal men saw the glory of heaven as well as some who occupied it (Matt. 17:1-13). Just before the Jews stoned Stephen, he saw *into* heaven (Acts 7:55-56). Paul was blinded by a light “from heaven” (Acts 9:3). John wrote that he saw the very throne of God “in heaven” (Rev. 4).

The fact that heaven is close enough for humans to see in very special cases throughout covenant history proves that, though heaven is distinct from the physical universe, it interacts with us and planet Earth. Heaven is simply *not* a far, far away place

The dotted line which separates our world from heaven in View 3 depicts two-way access. The line between heaven and our physical earth is not solid which shows that: (1) believers have access to heaven through their prayers to God, and (2) God has access to earth. God sees and involves himself in life here on earth. The line between heaven and our world is not solid. This has always been an important aspect of the biblical faith. The Nicene Creed says Christians believe “all things visible and invisible” in order to draw out a balance; there are two realms, and they interact in history.

The dotted line also implies that Christians can enter heaven when their physical life on earth is over. Ecclesiastes teaches that “the spirit returns to God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:7 NIV) and the New Testament teaches that “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27 KJV).

We emphasize that none of this implies that the physical creation is bad. In fact, heaven may surprise us in how tangible it really is. No

matter what we believe about the details of heaven, the Bible does not allow us to view it as a bookend to history. Heaven exists concurrent to earth's history – past, present and future. Heaven exists now, whether we have the eyes to see it or not.³ Ironically, Christians state this whenever they mention that their believing friends and loved ones who have died have “gone to heaven.” They live in heaven now, not merely at the end of planet Earth's history.

The Biblical View of Earth History

If you look carefully at the graph of our view (View 3) once again you will notice that we reject *all* forms of dispensationalism in planet Earth's natural history. When it comes to the physical creation, we agree with the old-earth creationist view that the fall did not cause a radical *physical* transformation in our world. But unlike current old-earth creationist views of the future, we also believe *the same principle applies to redemption*. Put simply, the curse on Adam is removed for all those in Christ. If the *curse* did not alter our physical world at the fall, then why should we expect God's *redemption* to alter our physical world?

Our view of earth history begins with the belief that Adam's fall and Christ's redemption are directly related to one another. The symmetry of biblical theology assumes this, as does the imagery and themes introduced in Genesis which come to completion in Revelation. Genesis and Revelation are true bookends to *redemptive* history. Both Genesis and Revelation relate the same story: Adam's fall and Christ's redemption.

We simply press the issue consistently. According to old-earth creationism's view of the past, much time in earth's history occurred between God's creation of the physical universe and the creation and fall of Adam.* We believe a kind of symmetry exists on the flip side, after redemption (a central subject of Revelation) is completed. If our physical world existed for a long time before the fall of Adam and was not radically affected by his sin, then it stands to reason that Christ's redemption would not entail a radically changed planet. *Thus, the history of planet Earth extends out each direction beyond the biblical story of the fall and redemption.*†

* We will defend a view of Genesis creation compatible with this conclusion in Chapters 13-18.

† We discuss the implications of this belief in Chapter 21.

Finished Salvation and the Coming of Christ

We believe our world could exist for a long time after the curse is removed for God's covenant people, all those "in Christ." Since the Bible is about redemptive history we believe nearly 2000 years *has* gone by since the final chapters in Revelation 21-22 were fulfilled. Jesus *finished* his redemptive work in the first century. This means the curse is *gone* for all those who live "in Christ." One preterist explains the issue well by saying:

Christ came to this world to repair the spiritual damage done by the first Adam, not to give us a shiny, new planet.⁴

That claim may sound strange, but many early Christian theologians taught precisely this view. They knew the work of Christ was *finished*. They believed redemption had been *accomplished*. The fourth-century theologian Athanasius put it this way:

He it is Who was crucified with the sun and moon as witnesses; and by His death salvation has come... all creation has been redeemed.⁵

This makes sense only if salvation is related directly to Adam's fall. Athanasius is not alone in his view of a *redeemed creation*. Augustine thought along similar lines in his view of the fulfillment of redemption in Christ. Within a hundred years of Athanasius, Augustine wrote:

He died, but he vanquished death; in himself he put an end to what we feared; he took it upon himself and he vanquished it, as a mighty hunter he captured and slew the lion. Where is death? Seek it in Christ, for it exists no longer; but it did exist and now it is dead. O life, O death of death!⁶

Consider what it means to reject this ancient Christian teaching. To deny this, one has to suggest that the work of Christ remains incomplete *today*. And if that is true, believers cannot yet call themselves "saved," nor can they enter God's presence in heaven. Are believers still waiting on their salvation?

Few consider how the answer to this question relates directly to what the Bible teaches about the coming of Christ. Notice how the writer of Hebrews connects the coming of Christ, what Christians today call the second coming, with the arrival of *salvation* for God's people:

[S]o Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. (Heb. 9:28 NIV)

The conclusion is obvious. If we are still waiting for the second coming of Christ, then we are *still waiting for Christ's salvation*. Any claim that Christ's work is finished implies the second coming has already happened. Conversely, if the second coming remains future to us, then Christ's work of salvation remains incomplete. Is Christ's work of redemption complete? Are believers saved yet? If the answer to these questions is "yes," then, in order to remain true to biblical teaching, one should naturally agree that the second coming has already happened.

Paul anticipated the arrival of salvation along the same lines as the writer of Hebrews:

And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is *almost* here. (Rom. 13:11-12 NIV)

We will discuss what Paul meant by the passing "night" and coming "day" in Chapter 15. What seems clear in Paul's teaching is that, in his own historical context, he waited patiently on the arrival of their salvation. This passage amounts to a veiled statement about the near coming of Christ. The Bible teaches that the work of Christ is complete because the coming of Christ took place right on schedule: at the end of the generation which rejected Jesus and persecuted the early Church (Matt. 24:34).

The Good Life in Christ

We say all that to say this: For Christians, life is good because of what God *has done* "in Christ." Life is good for the believer because Jesus says, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10 NKJV). Notice that Jesus is not talking about *physical* life, because everyone lived *physically* before he came. He is talking about *the same life that Adam lost in the Garden* – spiritual life in covenant friendship and communion with God. For Christians, life is *good*. They have been redeemed; they have been bought back from the curse which fell originally on Adam.

The very first objection to these conclusions will likely be, “What about the presence of biological death in our world?” The answer is that the physical operation of our world does not indicate the need for some ultimate physical conclusion where biological death no longer exists *if the physical world did not change* as a result of the curse on Adam.

What Do You Mean By Good?

The young-earth creationist view of a radical change in the world as a result of the curse is based on an arbitrary definition of “good.” Young-earth creationism teaches that if carnivorous animals ate one another before the curse or if biological death was a reality before the curse, then God’s creation could not be “good.” The reasoning for this conclusion is not demonstrated from a careful examination of Scripture; *it is assumed*. This conjecture then becomes the basis for an argument against pre-fall death and predation (and, by implication, an ancient fossil record). The argument is usually presented this way:

Once one accepts billions of years for the age of the earth, whether because of belief in slow and gradual processes to form rocks and fossils – and/or a trust in radiometric dating methods as giving accurate ages of rocks – it follows that the fossil record was laid down during hundreds of millions of years, before there were any people (and thus before human sin). However, the fossil record is not a pretty one! It shows evidence of animals eating each other...⁷

But where does the Bible say that animals did not eat each other before the fall? Where does the Bible insist upon that definition of “good”? Author Bernard Ramm sums up the issue:

Life can only live on life... Are we to believe that the lion and tiger, the ant-eater and the shark, were all vegetarians till Adam fell, and that the sharp claws of the big cats and the magnificent array of teeth in a lion’s mouth were for vegetarian purposes only? One might affirm that such a creation could hardly be called *good*, but that is pre-judging what good means.⁸

It makes more sense to believe the wild kingdom lives as we see it today because of God’s wisdom and perfect order. God’s creation is “good,” not because animals experienced no death at the beginning.

That fact is irrelevant. The creation is good because everything functions in balance precisely as God ordered it from the beginning. Ramm explains:

The cycle of Nature is an amazing thing, and the relationship between life to life sets up a magnificent *balance of Nature*. Unless a very large number of certain forms of life are consumed, e.g. insects and fish, the earth would shortly be overpopulated by them. Some fish lay eggs into the millions and if all such eggs hatched the ocean would shortly be all fish. Carnivorous animals and fish keep the balance of Nature.⁹

Author Albertus Pieters puts the issue slightly differently by saying:

So far as we can see now, the existence of carnivorous beasts (including insect eating birds) is necessary to preserve the “balance of nature.” Without insectivorous birds, insect life would soon destroy vegetation, and even apparently harmless little animals like rabbits may become a scourge if there are no foxes and other carnivora to keep their numbers in check... This “balance of nature” is essential to the perfection of God’s creation and we are not to reckon it a blemish or afterthought.”¹⁰

The idea of animals eating each other is not a bad thing at all. As the title and first line of one popular hymn says, “This Is My Father’s World.” When an animal does exactly what it was created to do, it serves God’s purpose. That is very good. How can carnivorous activity be a bad thing when the Psalmist – in a context of praise, rejoicing, and the glory of God – claims that God *participates* in the cycle of life and gives each of his creatures *good things to eat*?

The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God... There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number—living things both large and small. There the ships go to and fro, and the leviathan, which you formed to frolic there. These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. (Psalm 104:21, 25-28 NIV)

The Psalmist glories in predation: the precise thing which young-earth creationism teaches is a great evil in our world. If carnivorous activity is inherently evil, then (1) why does God involve himself in it and (2) why is God glorified by it?

Our God-Bathed World

The problem with a dispensational view of earth's natural history in relation to the fall is that God's creation models something. The physical creation, our world, teaches about God. It bears evidence of his personality. It demonstrates his love. And it warns of the raw danger of his power. Author David Chilton explains the theological principle by saying:

[A]ll creation is primarily symbolic. All creatures reflect the glory of God, and are images of some aspect or other of His nature. God's personality is imprinted on everything He has made.¹¹

This has been true *from the beginning* and it has tremendous implications for our view of creation. For if there was no death before the fall, then how could Adam comprehend God's warning "for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17 NKJV)? *Physical* death existed, outside the boundaries of the garden, at the very least, in order to serve as a *spiritual* warning to Adam. Death had to exist *before* the fall if Adam was to be informed in some manner about what God meant by the threat of death. In fact, even before the fall Adam could only live forever by his close relationship to the tree of life (Gen. 3:22).

Though it may seem an abstract point, the fact that God's covenant with Adam involved the promise of death for disobedience implies death existed *before* the fall. Also consider that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil also existed before the fall. This implies not only death, but evil existed *before* the fall.¹² If death and evil existed before the fall in some form, then we should not be surprised if they exist in some form *after* Christ's redemption is complete.

The Divine Purpose of Creation

The theological implications of the "no death before the fall" doctrine are profound when we consider the creation's role in teaching about spiritual things. Young-earth creationism is built upon an erroneous view of the divine purpose for God's creation. Those who believe

there was no biological death before the fall suggest the original creation was *tame* and *safe* in its entirety. But would that not teach falsehood about the biblical God? Is God tame and safe?

C.S. Lewis wrote a famous line at the end of his book titled *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Note how Lewis' conception of the lion Aslan in his story relates to the Genesis debate. Mr. Beaver tells the children:

“He'll be coming and going,” he had said. “One day you'll see him and another you won't. He doesn't like being tied down... Only you mustn't press him. He's wild, you know. Not like a *tame* lion.”¹³

The ferocity of Aslan is a good thing in the story – for everyone; it is mighty Aslan who kills the wicked White Witch and lifts the icy curse she held over Narnia.

Lewis draws on a biblical metaphor. In his story, Aslan is an allegorical reference to Jesus. Lewis knew that Jesus is compared metaphorically to a lion in various places in the Bible. He is the “Lion of Judah.” But consider the implications if God created vegetarian lions and lions eat red meat only as a result of the fall. If that is the case, the Bible compares Jesus to a fallen creature twisted by the curse! Did God originally make toothless lions?

To this example of a lion we could add many natural things which are downright dangerous. These things all existed before the fall. There were hurricanes on planet Earth before Adam. There were also avalanches. Meteor impacts, tornados, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions – the magnitude of which we can scarcely imagine – wiped out much life on planet Earth millions of years before Adam was on the scene. That is not even considering the interstellar explosions, each of which outdoes anything that ever happened on earth. These are not bad things. Remember, God created each and every one. He is glorified in them. They exist for a good reason. They teach us a very important lesson. **Beware! God!**

If there is one theological lesson that experience makes plain and obvious, it is this: *do not trifle with or underestimate the power of God*. The creation is naturally dangerous, because *God* is inherently dangerous. Learning this is the first step to finding true safety in the universe. If the relationship between us and our Creator God is restored through Christ, then we need have no fear about what happens to us in this

universe. The same God who made it and us can preserve us in his presence, no matter what. He promised he will – forever (Rom. 8:38-39).

The entire theology of the Bible assumes that the creation, God's good creation, teaches us many things about God. The creation plays a gigantic role in the parables Jesus used to teach about the Kingdom of God as it does in David's Psalms, the wisdom literature, and the writings of the prophets. It was all *created that way* for a reason. This is another sense in which the creation is *good*. Few realize this truth impacts biblical *interpretation* profoundly. Chilton emphasizes the role biblical/creational metaphors play in Revelation:

[John] presents Christ to his readers as a Lion and a Lamb, not because he thinks those are pretty pictures, but because of the connotations of lions and lambs already established in the Bible.¹⁴

These connotations in the Bible are grounded ultimately in God's good creation. In the Christian worldview, creation and covenant reflect one another. It was made for that purpose from the beginning. Author James Jordan implicitly refutes the young-earth creationism's view of a change in the physical creation at Adam's fall when he writes:

As we have seen, the doctrine of creation means that every created item, and also the created order as a whole, *reflects the character of the God who created it*. In other words, everything in the creation, and the creation as a whole, points to God. Everything is a sign or symbol of God [emphasis ours].¹⁵

How can the creation be a symbol of God, today, if the curse caused a manifest change in the physical universe? Would not a great change alter the creational symbols and make them false? If the creation *changed* as a result of the fall, then we are no longer viewing God's creation! This is precisely what Ken Ham, president of the young-earth creationist organization *Answers in Genesis*, teaches about our current world:

The problem with people like Sagan and Darwin was that they didn't understand (or wouldn't accept) that there was a perfect world to begin with – it was very good... When looking at this present world, these men weren't looking at the nature of God, but the results of our sin! What a difference.¹⁶

Ham refuses to allow the possibility that Adam's physical world is our world. Yet Adam was told to tend and keep the garden before the fall – the very kind of work that is familiar to us today. Adam and Eve had to eat to live – from their creation. Adam and Eve in God's garden relied on the tree of life (Gen. 3:22). This is another way of saying that their life relied on God, even before the fall. John uses the biblical image of the tree of life to teach about Jesus in Revelation 22, which is our world. Those who live in God's city, which is also a garden, have access to the tree of life (Rev. 22:14); those outside the gates do not (Rev. 22:15). The dispensational view of planet Earth's natural history, both past and future, is wrong.

A Biblical Defense of Death Before the Fall

So far, we've made a theological and philosophical case in favor of biological death before the fall of Adam. But can this case be demonstrated directly from Scripture? We believe it can. Early in Genesis we get a statement that shows, indirectly, that animals did then precisely what they do now – they ate one another.

One of the tasks God gave Adam was to *name* the animals:

Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. (Gen. 2:19 NKJV)

Names in the Bible are not neutral. Even the act of naming is significant. Naming implies dominion. God named Adam and renamed Abraham. God also gives a new name to each of his own according to Revelation 2:17 and 3:12. Names literally have meaning:

Words classify, but names orient. Words generalize, but names personify. Words dismiss living subjects into the realm of objectivity. Names pick up the little baby or the flower or the sun, and incorporate them into one society of communication.¹⁷

This is the way names work in the Bible. They describe appearances and unique personal characteristics. Adam means “red” or “earthy,” because he was taken from the ground. Esau means “hairy.” Jacob means “supplanter” (Gen. 25:25-26). Moses means “drawn out” because he and his little ark were “drawn out” of the Nile while the other Hebrew

male-children of Israel were being killed by Pharaoh (Ex. 2:10). (This is a striking recapitulation of the flood story in Genesis if you think about it: covenant context and all.)¹⁸ Jesus' Hebrew name is "Joshua" for "He will save his people from their *sins*" (Matt. 1:21 NKJV). The significance of names is prominent in the Bible.

The same principle applies to the animals. The Hebrew names for the animals are *descriptive*. "Lion" in Hebrew *means* "violent." The Hebrew word for "hawk" *means* "tearing." We have every reason to believe these Hebrew names came ultimately from Adam. Their meanings show that Adam observed the natural order with which we are very familiar because the names of the animals in Hebrew *match* the description we witness today. At no time did Adam experience a different physical world than ours.

It may be objected at this point that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, not Adam's language. But Adam called his helper "woman" in the same chapter in which we are told that he named the animals (Gen. 2). Woman *means* "taken out of man." Adam called her "woman" *before the fall*. If that pre-fall name is descriptive, then we have no reason to doubt that the other names Adam gave before the fall, as we have them in Hebrew, are descriptive as well! The biblical authors assume the *meaning* of the names referenced in Genesis 2 have been preserved from Adam's original language to biblical Hebrew. Indeed, "Eve" means "mother of all living" from Adam's day forward. To deny the names Adam gave to the animals are descriptive and preserved in Hebrew is to deny that *any* of Adam's names in Genesis 2-3 are descriptive and preserved in Hebrew. The meaning of the names of the animals in Hebrew indicates biological death and predation before the fall, for Adam named them before the fall.

An overlooked passage in Genesis also reveals how the idea of a radical change in the physical world at the time of the fall and the flood is foreign to the author of Genesis. Note this intriguing reference to the original garden:

Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, *like the garden of the Lord*, like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) (Gen. 13:10 NIV)

This text compares the physical condition of the Jordan Valley and Egypt to the physical condition of the original garden. Just as the well-

watered garden caused fruit trees and animals to grow and prosper, so the well-watered plain produced bountiful food for man and animals. The days of Abraham and Lot were long after the fall of Adam and Noah's flood, yet Genesis tells us that the conditions Abraham and Lot experienced on the plain of Jordan were *comparable* to the conditions in the garden of God!

How could the author of Genesis make this comparison (as well as a reference to the land of Egypt) if he believed planet Earth was an idyllic paradise radically different in Abraham's day from the time before the fall? This reference to God's garden in Genesis 13:10 suggests the author of Genesis understood that the physical creation functioned the same way in Adam's day as it did in Abraham and Lot's day. Young-earth creationist claims are not compatible with the comparison of the garden to both the Jordan Valley and to Egypt. Young-earth creationists insist that conditions in the garden are not comparable to *anything* in human history between the fall and their view of the final consummation to come at the end of history.

Or consider how one prophet compares the land of Israel to the garden of Eden before the arrival of God's judgment:

Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes. *Before them the land is like the garden of Eden*, behind them, a desert waste—nothing escapes them. (Joel 2:3 NIV)

A "literal" reading of the prophet suggests that there is no substantial physical difference between the garden of Eden and the land of Canaan before the exile. Joel explicitly *compares* the promised land to the garden of Eden.

Perhaps a better way to understand these two references to the original garden is simply that the imagery of the garden of Eden throughout the entire Bible is applied *wherever God's people live in friendship and covenant with God*. Abraham enjoyed God's presence and friendship while he lived both on the Jordan plain and while he lived in Egypt. Faithful Israel enjoyed God's presence and friendship in the promised land. This suggests the depiction of Eden in Genesis was never intended to describe a completely different *biological* world than we witness today. What do the biblical references to Eden mean? "What was most important about the Garden – indeed, that which made it a Garden at all – was God's presence with His people."¹⁹ Chil-

ton draws out the common thread between these post-fall references to the garden of Eden by writing:

God's people have always lived in "the Garden." For example, the land of Egypt is described in Genesis 13:10 as being "like the Garden of the Lord"... In this Edenic location they were *fruitful and multiplied* (Ex. 1:7) – the same expression as in God's original command to Adam and Eve in the Garden! The Promised Land also, as we would expect, was a land in which much of the Curse had been reversed: it was "like the Garden of Eden" (Joel 2:3), and therefore, "flowing with milk and honey" (Ex. 3:8).

As we shall see in the following pages, the restoration of Eden is an essential aspect of the salvation that Christ provides. When the Old Testament foretold the coming of Christ and the blessings He would bring, they often spoke in the language of Eden-restoration.²⁰

Eden as a place of God's presence and blessing is confirmed by other texts such as Lamentations 2:6; Isaiah 51:3; and Ezekiel 31: 8-9, 16-18, c.f. Matthew 13:31-32.

There is another place in Scripture which demonstrates that biological death existed before the fall. Consider what God tells Job:

The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, but they cannot compare with the pinions and feathers of the stork. She lays her eggs on the ground and lets them warm in the sand, unmindful that a foot may crush them, that some wild animal may trample them. She treats her young harshly, as if they were not hers; she cares not that her labor was in vain, *for God did not endow her with wisdom or give her a share of good sense.* (Job 39:13-17 NIV)

We are pretty sure that the crushing of eggs by a wild animal or random passer-by qualifies as death. But notice that Job says it is that way because God deprived the ostrich of wisdom and understanding *on purpose*. In other words, the ostrich was *created* that way. The crushing of her eggs and the death of her young from carelessness are both explicitly *not* a result of the curse on Adam, but from the way God made the ostrich in the first place.²¹

“When You Eat of it You Will Surely Die”

Biological death is a part of the created order from the very beginning, even for human beings. A careful reading of God’s command to Adam shows that the punishment for Adam’s disobedience could not have been biological death:

And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, *for when you eat of it you will surely die.*” (Gen. 2:16-17 NIV)

Notice that there is a *time statement* in God’s command/promise to Adam. Adam was told that *when* he ate of the tree he would “surely die.” Eve repeated this to the serpent who responded by saying, “You will not surely die.” If biological death is at issue during the temptation and fall of man, then God’s word to Adam proved to be false and the serpent’s lie proved to be true. Adam and Eve did not die, biologically, *when* they disobeyed God. They lived, biologically, for many years after they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. *A biological view of “the death” God promised Adam and Eve in the garden implies that God was the liar and the serpent told the truth.*

The simple *time statement* in God’s command/promise to Adam reveals the critical error in young-earth creationist views of the fall. Notice how the assumption is that “the death” God promised Adam must be defined *biologically*. Speaking of old-earth creationists, Ken Ham wrote:

But they accept the millions of years history for the fossil record, so to be consistent, they have to throw out original sin, and death being the penalty for man’s rebellion. **The god of an old earth cannot therefore be the God of the Bible who is able to save us from sin and death.**²²

The problem with Ham’s charge is confusion about the *nature* of “the death” Adam and Eve experienced when they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Again, did they die, biologically speaking, *when they ate*? No. Their eyes were opened, they experienced the shame of nakedness, and they hid from God’s presence. Then God appeared in judgment. When God determined their guilt by their own confessions, God executed his death sentence immediately. Adam broke the covenant relationship and was separated from God. That shows us that

the nature of “the death” they experienced when they ate was spiritual, not biological.

Jesus and the Adamic Curse

Perhaps a simple question about the life of Jesus can further illustrate the point that biological death is a normal aspect of human life in God's world. If Jesus had not died on the cross, would he have died a natural death at some point in his future? Remember, Jesus took on human flesh and a body like ours (1 John 4:2). He was “born of a woman” (Gal. 4:4). We suggest that Jesus would have experienced biological death at some point in his life because he was *human*, even though he never sinned.²³

Many claim that Jesus' death on the cross proves that biological death is at least part of the nature of God's curse on Adam. Those who make this argument seldom think through the context of the crucifixion or the implications of this biological view of God's curse. Jesus was not just born of a woman in fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, he was born under the Law (Gal. 4:4). *He also died under the Law*. The ultimate punishment in the Law was biological death, the death penalty. But the Law was only a shadow (Heb. 10:1). The death prescribed by the Law for disobedience was a *picture of a greater death*, the true nature of God's original curse (Heb. 10:28-29). A biological view of the curse on Adam implies biological death is the essence of the punishment for sin. The problem with this belief is that it makes the Law of Moses ultimate rather than pictorial.²⁴

The biological view of the curse has serious implications. If biological death is the nature of God's curse on Adam, then *every man pays the penalty for his own sin when he dies*. How can a just God hold anyone accountable beyond death *if* biological death is the nature of God's curse on Adam? Would not the young-earth biological view of death as penalty for sin suggest that all men are reconciled to God upon their death? Do all men pay the penalty for their own sin when they die? Furthermore, what about Christians who die? Did Jesus pay the entire penalty for the sin of his people? If the answer is “yes,” then biological death *cannot* be any part of the original penalty for sin, for Christians still experience biological death!

What was the true *nature* of the death Jesus experienced on the cross? Do we find any parallel between the crucifixion and the separation Adam and Eve experienced when they disobeyed God's command in the garden? This separation is precisely what Jesus suffered on the

cross when he cried out, “My God, My God, *why have you forsaken me?*” (Matt. 27:46 NIV). The sins that Jesus bore on the cross *separated* him from the Father, just as the original sin separated Adam, God’s first son, from the Father. The symmetry between the fall of Adam and the death of Jesus Christ demonstrates that the nature of “the death” for disobedience in the garden was *covenant death*, not biological death. Jesus died a biological death to fulfill the Law of Moses, but Jesus paid the true penalty for Adam’s sin when he was cut off from fellowship and communion with God the Father.

Humanistic Young-Earth Creationism

This brings us to another criticism of the young-earth *biological* view of the curse. Our world holds a divine purpose and fulfills God’s function from creation. While the curse is anthropocentric (i.e., centered on man and his covenant relationship with God), the creation is theocentric (i.e., centered on God). Author Dallas Willard captures a mind-boggling idea when he writes:

We pay a lot of money to get a tank with a few tropical fish in it and never tire of looking at their brilliant iridescence and marvelous forms and movements. But God has *seas full of them*, which he constantly enjoys. (I can hardly take in these beautiful little creatures one at a time.)²⁵

Willard’s insight should change radically the way we think of our world. Only the boundary of our imagination limits us in understanding God’s joy in his creation. Surely, he enjoyed watching T. rex dominate an era just as he enjoys watching tropical fish today. Perhaps he sees all of this at once. Can you imagine watching all of these things?

This may sound like a radical charge, but young-earth creationism is *humanistic* in its view of creation and the curse. It teaches that the sin of Adam and Eve cursed God’s entire universe. The working assumption behind this belief is that our entire universe revolves around man. Ironically, this humanistic perspective is not essentially different than the claims some Christians made during the geocentrism debate a few centuries ago. They, too, thought the entire universe must *physically* revolve around the earth and man. They, too, argued that astronomy must bow to the Bible (or at least their interpretation of it).

The idea that man’s sin could curse the enormous creation God made is implicitly humanistic. It posits that man’s physical place in this

world is far greater than the Bible warrants. The truth is God created all that exists for his own enjoyment. It is *not* all about us as much as we like to think highly of ourselves in our own modernistic pride.

The size and power of God's creation, which reflects the majesty of God, dwarfs man and returns us to that age-old question, "What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?" (Psalm 8:4 NKJV). The creation should evoke the same response in us as we see in David, "O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth!" (Psalm 8:9 NKJV). God blesses humans with life in his creation in order that our hearts will respond to his grace and draw near to him in thankful love and worship. Again, the creation is theocentric. Young-earth creationism's view of the fall suggests that man is really something in all of this. Adam brought the curse upon God's entire universe! But did the universe sin?

The Wild Creation and Our Wild God

John Eldridge, another popular Christian writer, utilizes the theocentric nature of creation when he writes:

It then occurred to me that after God made all this, he pronounced it *good*, for heaven's sake... The whole creation is unapologetically *wild*. God loves it that way.²⁶

If you have any doubts as to whether or not God loves wildness, spend a night in the woods...alone. Take a walk out in a thunderstorm. Go for a swim with a pod of killer whales. Get a bull moose mad at you. Whose idea was this, anyway? The Great Barrier Reef with its great white sharks, the jungles of India with their tigers, the deserts of the Southwest with all those rattlesnakes—would you describe them as "nice" places? Most of the earth is not safe; but it's good.²⁷

This is completely incompatible with modern young-earth creationism, but it is true. The creation is wild because it reflects the nature and personality of God. The truth does not end there. God's image is reflected in the crown jewel of his vast creation: man. Both Adam and Eve demonstrate aspects of God's own nature:

Eve was created within the lush beauty of Eden's garden. But Adam, if you'll remember, was created *outside* the Garden, in the wilderness. In the record of our beginnings, the second

chapter of Genesis makes it clear: Man was born in the out-back, from the untamed part of creation.²⁸

That is why Adam could name the animals God brought to him. Adam had *personal* experience with those dangerous animals that lived outside the garden. He may have even been a lion hunter. He likely tried his hand at stalking, chasing, and observing it all, for he knew how to describe everything that was native in his experience. He was made to be wild in some sense, just like God:

Aggression is part of the masculine *design*; we are hard-wired for it. If we believe that man is made in the image of God, then we would do well to remember that “the LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name” (Ex. 15:3).²⁹

The Intelligent Design apologist can appreciate that. The young-earth creationist cannot. It is a good thing for a man to be masculine. It is this for which he was made. Adam was in training for what was coming next. He learned the necessary skills to lead, guide, and protect his coming bride and family, even before he was introduced to whoa!-man.

Adam, the Serpent, and Inevitable Death

Adam’s failure in the garden began as a failure to protect the woman from the serpent who invaded his domain. Adam’s failure resulted from cowardice.³⁰ Here is an intriguing question:

What was Adam supposed to do when a big dragon came to his wife and began tempting her to sin? I think he was supposed to do exactly what the Last Adam did: Crush the serpent’s head. But that means that maintaining the un-fallen world of the creation depended on Adam’s willingness to kill. To turn it around, Adam’s fall is precisely a refusal to deal death to the serpent.³¹

It is quite astonishing to consider that if Adam had crushed the head of the serpent, as Jesus did later, then there would be death in God’s world and no fall! God created a world in which someone was going to die during the temptation of Adam and Eve, either man or serpent. So we see once again that *biological death cannot be the nature of God’s curse*.

Male aggression is natural. It is not inherently evil or sinful. Aggression is only bad when it is acted out under the dominion of sin in the heart. Aggression can be a good thing when it serves a holy purpose. The man who is aggressive towards plants and animals *provides for* his family. This is called farming and ranching.³² All good work involves aggression at some level, even if it means typing thoughts like these on a computer keyboard in order to reach out and grab your attention. All good work also involves a matching measure of humility as well. Humans must observe the conditions around them. Humans can only do good work in this world by loving and serving both God and neighbor.

We should not neglect the complementary side. Woman has her role to play in all of this. She is the soft beauty of creation, born in the safety and protection of the garden. She is the crown of all God's creation, God's final touch. Don't get us wrong. She, too, was made in God's image and likeness. She can be fierce, just as man can be tender. Man and woman together teach, "One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: that you, O God, are strong, and that you, O LORD, are loving" (Psalm 62:11-12 NIV).

To sum up, the fall of man has *nothing* to do with the biological death we witness in our world. Biological death is built into the created order from the beginning. Death is a part of life and serves a divine purpose. It is God's own external sign of a spiritual reality. It is necessary in God's "very good" creation. The nature of the fall in Scripture relates to something other than biological life and death. When Adam and Eve sinned they lost covenant life: union and communion with God. This separation from God is precisely what Jesus experienced on the cross. After the fall, Adam and Eve no longer walked with God in *this* world. They died. They were now separated from the true source of life, health, and peace. They were kicked out of the garden and barred from access to the tree of life. But of course, the story doesn't end there.

Redemption and Our World

The proper understanding of the *nature* of Adam's curse in the garden provides us with the model for a proper understanding of Christ's redemption in our world. Adam's curse and Adam's death is what we must keep in mind when we read the Bible's conclusion:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away... And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of

God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Rev. 21:1, 3-4 NIV)

Remember what we already covered in Chapters 1 through 4. Jesus predicted that “Heaven and earth will pass away” (Matt. 24:35 NKJV) in his Olivet Discourse. He told them in the previous verse that all those things would come to pass before their generation passed away. The Olivet Discourse is the context for what Peter wrote about a coming “new heaven and new earth:”

But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.
(2 Peter 3:13 NIV)

Many overlook the fact that the new heaven and earth has nothing to do with a re-creation of our physical universe, but everything to do with the removal of sin’s curse.

It is only natural to assume that Peter promised the same new heaven and earth we see in Revelation. Why would we assume John refers to anything other than what Jesus and Peter promised when John writes of a “new heaven and new earth” (Rev. 21:1)?

Like Jesus and Peter, John referred to the complete arrival of the new order – the new covenant – finally manifested at the coming of Christ in AD 70. Christ’s first appearing was for the purpose of offering himself as a sacrifice for sin. Forty years later, Jesus brought salvation to all the faithful covenant people of God at his second priestly appearance when he came in the full cloud-glory of his father (Heb. 9:25-28). It was the completed work of Jesus Christ, the true high priest, which removed “the death” Adam suffered at the fall for all those in Christ. The “new heaven and new earth” is where “righteousness dwells.” It exists wherever God’s people live. They have had their sins removed once and for all. They have truly returned to the tree of life:

On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. (Rev. 22:2-3 NIV)

Notice again: this cannot be heaven, in traditional terms, because there is healing going on. Is there sickness in heaven? No—there is sickness on earth. But the *nature* of this sickness of the nations has nothing to do with biology or the fact that the nations exist in God's physical creation. Healing occurs in this new order, but it is a specific *kind* of healing. Jesus Christ heals the sickness that is caused by human sin. John sees the nations being made whole through acceptance of the gospel. Jesus Christ is the reality behind the tree of life imagery. All who live in him – feeding upon him – *can never die*.

Dallas Willard captures what all of this means for believers today:

In any case, Jesus made a special point of saying that those who rely on him and have received the kind of life that flows in him and in God will never experience death. Such persons, he said, will never see death, never taste death (John 8:51-52). On another occasion he says simply that “everyone living and believing in me shall never die” (11:26).³³

John also happens to be the author of Revelation. He taught nothing different about death in Revelation than what Jesus taught during his ministry. Willard continues with the implications of this most distinctive aspect of Christian doctrine – the defeat of death:

So as we think of our life and make plans for it, we should not be anticipating going through some terrible event called “death,” to be avoided at all costs even though it can't be avoided. That is the usual attitude for human beings, no doubt. But, immersed in Christ in action, we may be sure that our life—yes, that familiar one we are each so well acquainted with—will never stop. We should be anticipating what we will be doing three hundred or a thousand or ten thousand years from now in this marvelous universe.³⁴

Does this not lead to a life of joy and peace for Christians? Does it fill you with wonder? With anticipation? Believers should know they can never die because they *have been* redeemed. They have been redeemed because Christ *has come*. They should understand by faith that the death which fell on Adam *has been* removed from them. For Christians, the curse is *gone*.

The Death of Death in Historic Church Teaching

You may be astonished at this point that anyone might claim Revelation 21-22 is fulfilled today. The idea of the complete defeat of death seems absurd in our modern Christian environment dominated by futurism (and young-earth creationism). We stress again that this teaching is nothing new. Modern futurism and modern young-earth creationism is what is truly new. The early Christian Church taught the “death of death” in the finished work of Christ. Listen to Athanasius once again:

He has come into our country and dwelt in one body amidst the many, and in consequence the designs of the enemy against mankind have been foiled, and the corruption of death, which formerly held them in its power, has simply ceased to be.³⁵

Death has become like a tyrant who has been completely conquered by the legitimate monarch; bound hand and foot as he now is, the passersby jeer at him, hitting him and abusing him, no longer afraid of his cruelty and rage, because the king who has conquered him. So has death been conquered and branded for what it is by the Savior on the cross. It is bound hand and foot, all who are in Christ trample it as they pass and as witnesses to Him deride it, scoffing and saying, “O Death, where is thy victory? O grave, where is thy sting?”³⁶

Or consider Augustine:

The devil jumped for joy, when he seduced the first man and cast him down to death. By seducing the first man, he slew him; by slaying the last man, he lost the first from his snare. The victory of our Lord Jesus Christ came when he rose, and ascended into heaven; then was fulfilled what you have heard when the Apocalypse was being read, “The Lion of the tribe of Judah has won the day.”³⁷

Augustine claims the Apocalypse (i.e., the book of Revelation) was fulfilled in the first century! The victory over death is not something he awaited. It is something he believed was accomplished in the victory of Jesus.

With this ancient Church teaching in mind, look once again at the issue of the curse framed by one old-earth creationist:

Jesus undoes the work of Adam by bringing life where Adam brought death. How does Jesus do this? Does he give eternal life to all the animals? There is nothing in Scripture to warrant such a belief, much as we might like to say that “all dogs go to heaven.” No – Jesus brings spiritual life to humans right away, as Adam brought spiritual death right away.³⁸

Milton Terry sees the connection in the *nature* of the message of Genesis and Revelation, from the beginning of the Bible to the end, when he wrote:

The Edenic apocalypse is clearly seen to set forth an age-long conflict *in the moral world*, and to foreshadow what the end shall be [emphasis ours].³⁹

Notice how Terry places both man's fall and redemption in relation to his covenant relationship to God: the *moral* world.

Futurism Bites the Genesis Debate

Why is this truth – the arrival of the new order – so hard to grasp for modern Christians? Many miss the truth of what the Bible teaches because they view the curse in *physical* terms as young-earth creationism teaches. If the curse radically altered the physical world, then it is true that the curse can only be removed when all biological death is removed forever. *But what if the curse had nothing to do with biological death?* This is old-earth creationism's view of earth's history in regard to the past.

When old-earth creationists argue for a coming new physical universe with new physical laws where no biological death exists, they have implicitly agreed with the young-earth creationism's view of the curse in regard to the future and have succumbed to a self-contradiction. Preterism offers the only solution. As one preterist explains:

The main reason that dispensationalists are wrong about the end is because they are expecting something the Bible never promises... The spiritual relationship *has been* repaired (reconciled) through the finished work of Christ (read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21).⁴⁰

However, we must be consistent. If dispensationalism is wrong about the end, then it is also wrong in its view of the *nature* of the fall and curse on Adam at the beginning. For their doctrine of the end is merely the *logical application* of their belief that the curse on Adam introduced biological death and drastically changed the physical creation.

The Whole Creation Groans... Until Now

Now we are ready to examine what may be the most oft-quoted passage about the curse in young-earth creationist literature. Paul writes:

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. (Romans 8:20-22 NKJV)

Whitcomb and Morris use this passage as *proof* for the young-earth creationist view of the fall. In his comment about Romans 8:20-22, he even notes the *timing* involved regarding *when* this futility (or vanity) took place:

It was *the time* of the Edenic curse of Genesis 3:17-19 that “the creation was subjected to vanity” by God [emphasis ours].⁴¹

We completely agree with Whitcomb and Morris that Paul refers to the time when God placed the curse on creation at Adam’s fall. But notice that Paul gives a *time statement for when this groaning would come to an end*. He writes:

For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together *until now*. (Romans 8:22 NKJV)

When did Paul write that? He wrote it nearly 2000 years ago. He did not say that the creation would groan until physical death was removed. He said the creation groaned until “now” – his day. Author Don Preston elaborates on the sense of nearness which pervades all of Paul’s teaching in Romans 8:

Whatever else we might think or ponder, we must honor the imminence of the text of Romans 8. Paul uses three

words of imminence to speak of the coming glory, manifestation, redemption. The glory was “about to be revealed” [*mello* with the infinitive]... He uses *apekdekomai* (eager expectation), and *apokaradokeo* (to look with neck outstretched). All of these words, combined in one text, give us a sense of almost overwhelming imminence. If we are going to do correct exegesis, we must honor what the text offers us.⁴²

We will look more closely at what Paul has in mind as his definition of “creation” in Chapters 17 and 18. It is enough to point out now that if the timing of the curse is important in Scripture, then the timing of redemption is also important in Scripture. Snoke seems to agree, but appears to not understand the full implication when he writes:

To get technical, Romans 8:22 says that all creation has been groaning “up to now”... Paul simply says “until now.”⁴³

The Adamic curse and the Adamic death ended in the first century. They have never returned for any who remain in Christ. Paul’s teaching demonstrates again that the curse had *nothing* to do with biological death in the first place. Therefore, biological death is irrelevant to the accomplished work of redemption John saw as “coming soon” (Rev. 22:7, 12, 20).

Ironically, many sing this rich Christian theology every Christmas season. Consider this portion of Isaac Watts’ famous Christmas carol, “Joy to the World”:

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make his blessings flow,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found.

How we understand the curse will have direct implications for how we understand the redemption of Christ. Indeed, “Joy to the world, the Lord is come!” But that raises a question which will prepare us for the coming chapters on Genesis creation. When Watts proclaims,

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make his blessings flow,

Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found

is it *literally* true? Or is this famous Christmas carol *biblically* true?

CHAPTER 13

THE GREAT CREATION DEBATE



So far, we have dealt with two of the three pillars of modern young-earth creationism. We covered the issue of the flood in Chapters 7 through 10 as well as Adam's fall, the nature of the curse, and Christ's redemption in Chapters 11 and 12. We now turn our attention to the creation account.

Before we begin, we should note that our conclusions on Genesis creation are distinct from the other issues we have covered. Our arguments for a local flood in Genesis and our view of the curse that centers on man's covenant relationship with God stand independent of any specific approach to Genesis creation. The reader should keep in mind that those views of the flood and the curse could conceivably be compatible with more than one view of Genesis creation.

The Early Date for the Writing of Genesis

One of the first questions to ask in order to understand any portion of the Bible is the original authorship and date of writing. Currently, two views of Genesis authorship dominate the discussion over Genesis. Liberals, who reject divine inspiration, contend that Genesis was pieced together during the Babylonian captivity from documents which at that time were 300 hundred years old at most. This view of the source of Genesis is called the "Documentary Hypothesis." Conservatives reject the Documentary Hypothesis and generally claim that Moses wrote what we know as Genesis in its entirety.

Mosaic authorship places the date of Genesis at the end of the Egyptian captivity and/or during the time in the wilderness. This is about 800 years earlier than the liberal date, but the idea of Mosaic authorship is still a late date for the book of Genesis. Mosaic authorship would mean,

not only that perhaps thousands of years went by between the time of the events referenced in early Genesis and Moses' day, but also that there was no written Word of God for God's people until the time of Moses. The standard view of Mosaic authorship is not the latest date for the book of Genesis (i.e., Documentary Hypothesis), but it is a late date *relative to the actual events* referenced in Genesis.

A surprising variety of well-known authors in the Genesis debate reject both liberal and conservative versions of a late date for Genesis. These authors suggest that Genesis was written originally by some combination of the characters we read about in Genesis: Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and possibly others. Perhaps what we find in Genesis is a compilation of family records produced by the people and families in Genesis. While Moses may have been an editor who gave us Genesis as we know it, the early date for Genesis implies that he copied and possibly translated pre-existing, written accounts.

This view of the direct authorship and early date for Genesis suggests that the Hebrews had a written Bible while they lived under captivity in Egypt (rather than mere oral tradition or legend). It also means that some written form of God's Word has always existed from Adam's day on. We will call this position the "early date" for Genesis, and it is far more conservative in its view of God's direct inspiration of Genesis than the standard conservative view of Mosaic authorship.

Writers of every persuasion in the Genesis debate defend an early date for the book. Ken Ham, a prominent young-earth creationist author, explains:

In Genesis 5:1 (NIV) we read that: "This is the written account of Adam's line." Presumably, Adam wrote down all the details that God had given him concerning the original creation. He would have recorded the other events under God's direction, and Moses later obtained this material and compiled it into the book of Genesis.¹

James Jordan, another young-earth creationist author, explains the problem of the modern "oral tradition" view of Genesis:

We have to question the notion of some "oral tradition" from Adam forward. Human memory is quite selective... Oral traditions do not last for hundreds and thousands of years. They constantly change as creative poets find them-

selves unable to resist altering them and as societies undergo transformations (as all do).²

Unwittingly, conservatives put the inspiration and infallibility of Genesis in jeopardy by insisting on Mosaic authorship.³ Those who adamantly stand for the late date of Mosaic authorship face some difficult questions. Is there any other portion of our Scripture which existed merely as oral tradition for centuries or millennia before it was written down? No, there is not. Why should we think Genesis comes to us any differently? Jordan explains the biblical facts regarding the authorship of Genesis when he notes:

There is not a whit of biblical evidence that Moses wrote Genesis. The Bible never states or even implies that he did.⁴

[N]owhere does the Bible ever say that Moses wrote Genesis. It was part of the corpus of five books that Moses put in the Tabernacle, but he is never said to have been its author... There is simply no reason to believe such a thing.⁵

Writers on the other side of the Genesis debate agree with this “early date” for Genesis. Don Stoner, a prominent old-earth creationist author, explains:

[T]here is evidence that even this older form of Hebrew may have been a translation from a yet older account.⁶

Bernard Ramm, another old-earth creationist author, weighs in by speaking favorably about the work of P.J. Wiseman, an early date pioneer:

If we most surely ask the *Vedas* and the *Koran* and the *Book of Mormon* to come to some sort of responsible accounting of their origin and transmission, and to some accounting to historical fact and consistency of teaching, we cannot expect our doctrine of inspiration to *exempt* the Bible from such a similar calling to responsibility. We should be charitable toward all evangelical efforts which try to clear up the problems [related to sources] of the early chapters of Genesis.⁷

One surprising implication of the early dating of Genesis, at least for young-earth creationists who tout the view, is that the flood event is recorded firsthand from Noah’s point of view. That means all the uni-

versal qualifiers in the account may apply, not merely to a *covenant* context as a covenant story, but also in relation to *Noah's vantage point*; we might say that the waters covered the land from horizon to horizon, i.e., everything under heaven that Noah could see from the ark. Whitcomb and Morris do not appear to realize these implications of granting an early date for Genesis when they suggest it:

Now if it be granted that the Scriptures imply that men could read and write before the Flood, is it not reasonable to assume that Noah and his sons could have provided an accurate written account of the Flood for *postdiluvian humanity*?⁸

Augustus Strong, the historic Baptist theologian, followed this approach to argue for a local flood:

Scripture uses the phrases of common life rather than scientific terminology. Thus the language of appearance is probably used in Gen 7:19 – “all the high mountains that were under whole heaven were covered” – such would be the appearance, even if the deluge were local instead of universal.⁹

The Jamieson-Faussett-Brown Commentary makes a similar point:

This is the testimony of a spectator recording his impressions of what he witnessed, and therefore all the hills were those within the range of his visible horizon – i.e., the highlands of Armenia.¹⁰

Universality from Noah's vantage point is quite a different statement than the dogmatic assumption that the floodwaters covered all the dry land across planet Earth. There are more surprising implications for an early date and original authorship of Genesis; we will point them out as we go.

The Nature of Biblical Language

One of the problems with modern debates over Genesis is that those involved tend to think primarily in terms of conclusions rather than underlying methods used to arrive at those conclusions. Arguments revolve around whether the days of Genesis are literal 24-hour days as we know them, long ages of deep geological time, or a figurative tool of communication in Hebrew poetry. Other issues relate to whether or not

a billions-of-years-old earth is compatible with the Genesis account. Or sometimes the issue is based on how much room in the debate should be allowed for science and how much room must be reserved for Scripture alone. All of these items are conclusions which flow from underlying presuppositions and philosophical methods. To get to the bottom of the Genesis debate one must examine and evaluate the bedrock source for any particular view of Genesis creation.

Perhaps the greatest neglect in the debate over creation is the absence of a serious inquiry into *the nature of biblical language*. How can we approach Scripture to understand what it teaches without first thinking deeply about its own mode and style of communication? This is where some of the most significant assumptions are made in the Genesis debate. Bernard Ramm explains:

Genuine relevant thinking cannot be accomplished in the realm of Bible-and-science until the nature of Biblical language has been deeply probed. Few books on Bible-and-science treat this point. In those books that do touch on this subject the treatment is usually singularly superficial.¹¹

It is very important to grapple with the nature of biblical language in order to see properly what the Bible *means* by what it *says*. Note how this issue is just as important when interpreting prophecy. Preterist views of prophecy begin with an examination of the nature of language we find in prophetic texts as well as a comparison of key terms and phrases as they are used elsewhere in the Bible. Preterism understands symbolism and hyperbole rightly to be an essential part of apocalyptic* or prophetic communication; this is a distinguishable type or genre of biblical language which was never intended to be taken in a woodenly literal fashion.

Preterists understand that many errors in prophetic interpretation come from a single mistake based on a plain, "literal" way of reading the text. Many Christians do not consider the wide variety of the styles of language we find in the Bible. Could it be that a similar error pervades the Genesis debate? David Chilton touches a fundamental issue when he notes:

* We use the term "apocalyptic" in its older sense of "unveiling" or "disclosure" rather than the common use related to the topic of the end of the world.

The Bible is *literature*: It is divinely-inspired and inerrant literature, but it is literature all the same. This means we must *read* it as literature... We cannot understand what the Bible really (literally) means unless we appreciate its use of literary styles.¹²

Preterism emphasizes the variety of genres we find in Scripture. It suggests that it would be a great mistake to read the gospels and Revelation the exact same way. Preterism also emphasizes the importance of the original audience's expectations and cultural mindset. These same issues are paramount in any sincere attempt to understand Genesis. Perhaps preterist methods of biblical interpretation can carry the Genesis debate out from the very lengthy shadow of the 20th century liberal/fundamentalist controversy.

Literalism, Interpretation, and Inspiration

One great statement to kick off discussions related to the creation account in Genesis is offered by Milton Terry, the noted preterist and old-earth creationist¹³ theologian. Terry is still regarded by conservatives as an authority on sound biblical interpretation. He writes:

Any satisfactory interpretation of Genesis must be preceded by a *determination of the class of literature to which it belongs*.¹⁴

The young-earth view radically simplifies the issue of the nature of biblical language. This is its Achilles heel. Virtually all biblical language is assumed to be intended in its plainest, most literal sense. From this oversimplification a serious confusion arises. *Truth is equated with literality*. We are told, for example, that if what Genesis 1 says is true, then it must be "literal." Austin Farrer, another famous preterist and old-earth creationist theologian, cuts through the folly of this notion in typical 19th-century brusque fashion:

There is a current and exceedingly stupid doctrine that symbol evokes emotion and exact prose states reality. Nothing could be further from the truth: exact prose abstracts from reality, symbol represents it. And for that very reason, symbols have some of the many-sidedness of wild nature.¹⁵

The idea that exact writing (literal prose) is the only way God can communicate “truthfully” about the creation is absurd. The ultimate problem with thinking this way about Genesis is that interpretation and inspiration become fused into one seamless reality by the young-earth “literalist.” Ramm highlights the problem:

The psychological problem is that so many Christians *fail to differentiate interpretation from inspiration*. For example, if from childhood a student has heard only of a universal flood, he will consider a local flood as a heretical innovation. Or, if a Christian has known only the gap theory of Gen. 1, having read it in *The Scofield Reference Bible*... such a person will feel that other interpretations are trifling with Sacred Scripture... First, one must realize that *revelation is not interpretation*, and conversely, *interpretation is not revelation*. Revelation is the communication of divine truth; interpretation is the effort to understand it. One cannot say: “I believe just exactly what Gen. 1 says and I don’t need any theory of reconciliation with science.” Such an assertion identifies revelation with interpretation. The problem still remains; *what does Gen.1 say or mean or involve us in?* Our mutual problem is not this: is Genesis inspired? On that we agree. Our problem is: what does Gen. 1 mean – how do we interpret it?¹⁶

Lest you think we exaggerate the problem with young-earth creationism’s hard-core literalism, consider this quote by Ken Ham:

We should take Genesis literally. Furthermore, it should be noted that you cannot “interpret literally,” for a “literal interpretation” is a contradiction in terms. You either take it literally or you interpret it!¹⁷

Ham’s comment is bizarre, but it illustrates the point. Ham’s interpretive entry into the debate is based on a strange assumption about the nature of biblical language we find in early Genesis. Does it not appear that Ham has arbitrarily rigged the discussion about creation from the start? This is a classic example of begging the question at hand. Most young-earth creationists refuse to first consider the question of the *literary genre* we find in early Genesis. Truth is equated with “literality.” No other option is allowed, because... just because!¹⁸

In the final analysis, young-earth creationists seem too often unwilling or incapable of seeing the difference between divine *inspiration* and their own arbitrary method of *interpretation*. Author Conrad Hyers points out the problem:

Even if evolution is only a scientific theory of interpretation posing as scientific fact, as the [young-earth] creationists argue, [young-earth] creationism is only a religious theory of biblical interpretation posing as biblical fact.¹⁹

Few consider the possibility that evolution and young-earth creationism may both be equally erroneous. This problem of identifying a particular interpretation of Genesis with divine inspiration is displayed prominently by the young-earth organization *Answers in Genesis*. Their bold motto is: “Upholding the Authority of the Bible from the Very First Verse.” The implication is clear. Those who disagree with their approach to Genesis reject biblical authority from the very first verse. A crucial ingredient to make progress in the Genesis debate is the humility to distinguish human interpretation from divine inspiration.

This is not to say that arbitrary literalism is applied consistently by young-earth creationists. When pressed on other parts of the Bible, they tend to make allowances for differing *interpretations*. Consider Henry Morris’ response to criticism of premillennialism’s dominance within the young-earth creationist movement:

[A]lthough John Whitcomb and I are convinced premillennialists, the publishers of our book, *The Genesis Flood* (which many say catalyzed modern creationism), normally publish only amillennial and postmillennial books. There are in fact quite a few [young-earth] creationists who are postmillennialists and probably even more who are amillennialists. The common ground of almost all Christian [young-earth] creationists is simply that they believe in God and the Bible, not a *particular understanding* of eschatology [emphasis ours].²⁰

Do you see the inconsistent standard Morris applies from one end of the Bible to the other? Morris admits that Christians can have different *understandings* of prophecy and still believe in God and the Bible. But woe to any Christian who parts with their “literalism” in Genesis! Those who do not believe that Genesis references the creation of the universe in six 24-hour days, a biological curse which altered our uni-

verse, or a worldwide flood simply don't believe what the Bible says, according to them. If interpretive issues lead to competing *interpretations* of prophecy, does it not seem reasonable that these same issues would lead legitimately to competing *interpretations* of creation? What is more, the images we find in early Genesis are directly related to the images we find in Revelation!

Preterists address this issue regarding the distinction between *inspiration* and *interpretation* when dealing with many whose *interpretation* of the coming of Christ as necessarily a future event is equated with *divinely inspired truth*. Author Samuel Frost notes this important distinction when arguing for wider acceptance of preterism:

The esteemed Louis Berkhof gave two presuppositions for Reformed theology with regard to these matters. The first is that the dogmas of the church are changeable. The very need for a history of dogma supposes this fact, since truth does not have a history. One does not “develop” truth. Truth “is.” Scripture cannot be broken, but the interpretation and apprehension of that once for all faith delivered to the saints in Scripture has undergone change, and even complete transformation, through the centuries.²¹

All should realize that the distinction between *interpretation* and *inspiration* must be recognized in order for honest examination and critical evaluation to take place. The very same issue applies to debates on both the beginning and the end of the Bible.

Agreement of “Literalists” and Evolutionists

Could it be possible that dogged “literalism” places young-earth creationism in agreement with their evolutionist arch-enemies? The stunning truth is that, contrary to popular thought, evolutionary atheists have much in common with young-earth creationists. Young-earth creationists *agree* with the evolutionists about the “proper” reading of Genesis. Conrad Hyers sums up the issue well:

Thus, quite ironically, those who would dismiss the Bible as contradicting science and those who would defend it as the true science find themselves in agreement that these biblical texts are to be interpreted “literally”...²²

Both the evolutionist and young-earth creationist read Genesis the same way! The young-earth creationist demands literalism out of theo-

logical habit, and the evolutionist demands literalism out of theological and literary ignorance. The agreement between young-earth creationists and evolutionists about what Genesis teaches is a good example of C.S. Lewis' famous dictum, "The devil sends errors into the world in pairs of exact opposites." The error is forcing Genesis creation into a plain, literal "box." The natural result of this error is the explosive conflict that rages around us today.

As Lewis elaborates on his dictum, he describes both extremes in the debate over origins very well:

He relies on your extra dislike of the one error to draw you gradually into the opposite one. But do not be fooled. We have to keep our eyes on the goal and go straight through between both errors.²³

The extremes of young-earth creationism and atheistic evolutionism represent two opposing sides that, in many ways, need each other to propagate themselves generation after generation. Both extremes in the debate grow from the same "literalist" soil; they both defend or dismiss Genesis creation as merely a literal record of the Christian doctrine of creation. The result is predictable:

The extremity of [young-earth] creationist charges and claims is, to a degree, a reflection of corresponding extremities on the part of evolutionists themselves. Both extremes tend to fuel the fires of the other, and to find their worst fears realized.²⁴

Concerned Christians would do well to point out to both sides that there are other interpretive options on the proverbial table. Of course, this debate between interpretive methods begs the question: Was the creation account in Genesis meant to be interpreted as a modern, scientifically precise, literal statement of God's creation of the universe?

Church History and the Days of Creation

Another strange observation about the way many Christians view the days of creation in Genesis 1 is the idea that Christians have *always* believed these days were ordinary, 24-hour days. Multitudes of young-earth creationists would be shocked to find out that the "literal" interpretation of the days in Genesis 1 finds little to no support in ancient interpretations of Genesis.

Josephus, a first century Jew who was contemporary to the early Church, offers this comment on the need to explain the length of day in Genesis 1:

[T]he cause of which I am able to give even now; but because I have promised to give such reasons for all things in a treatise by itself, I shall put off its exposition till that time.²⁵

Unfortunately, we have no record of Josephus fulfilling his promise. But his parenthetical comment is significant. If Josephus believed the days in Genesis 1 are identical to the 24-hour days with which we are familiar, one wonders why he felt the need to give his exposition in a separate treatise!

Josephus was not the only ancient to read the days of Genesis 1 as something different than ordinary 24-hour days. Virtually all of the early Church writers interpreted the days of creation as days of a thousand years each, so that 6000 years of human history is bound up in the creation week. Davis Young notes this recurring theme in early Church teachings related to the days of Genesis:

They had no difficulty whatever in transferring the days of creation into thousand-year periods... For them the concept of day was much broader than merely an ordinary, solar day... Why this connection between creation and history was made is obscure. No reason for it is given by the fathers; it was simply assumed and taught.²⁶

Justin Martyr (100-166), Irenaeus (130-200), Hippolytus (170-236), Clement of Alexandria (150-220), Origen (185-254), and Lactantius (250-325) and many others held to non-literal interpretations of the days of Genesis.²⁷

Augustine explicitly repudiated the notion that Genesis 1 references ordinary days. He taught the days were not ordinary days, but “God-divided” days used to communicate God’s incomprehensible act of creation:

But at least we know that [the creation day] is different from the ordinary day with which we are familiar.²⁸

Terry gives a good summation of the history of interpretation in Genesis:

It has from ancient times been felt by the most devout and thoughtful interpreters that much in the earlier chapters of Genesis must be understood in some other than a literal sense. St. Augustine spoke of the “ineffable days” of creation, and all the common readers since his time have wondered that light should have been separately created three days before the sun.²⁹

Just as it is strange that so many Christians think global flood geology is what Christians have always believed about Noah’s flood, so it is with literal, 24-hour day views of Genesis 1. The idea that Genesis 1 records an exact record of six consecutive 24-hour days identical to our ordinary week does not find support in early Church history. Note how Morris implies these Church fathers were compromisers:

[T]heologians and church leaders in almost every denomination scurried in hasty retreat to the old compromising types of exegesis used by earlier theologians, such as Origen and Augustine...³⁰

This statement reveals the charade of young-earth creationism’s claim to the “traditional” view of Genesis 1. They often claim their literal reading is the “traditional view” of the Church, and that modern non-literal views of Genesis 1 are a result of modern science. But Origen and Augustine *predate* modern geology and science by more than 1000 years! Or consider how Martin Luther acknowledged that his “literal” view of the days of creation broke with the teaching of the Church fathers:

We must understand that these days were actual days (veros dies), contrary to the opinion of the holy fathers. Whenever we observe that the opinion of the fathers disagree with Scripture, we reverently bear with them and acknowledge them to be our elders. Nevertheless, we do not depart from the authority of Scripture for their sake.³¹

Luther’s exhortation is right and true, but the reason he needs to offer it is because he understood his “literal” view of the creation days *broke with Church tradition before him*. Luther also took a highly “literal” view of what the Bible says about astronomy in places like Joshua 10. We will discuss his views on the geo-centrism debate of his day in Chapter 19, but notice what Luther’s acknowledgement means. Non-

literal views of the creation days go all the way back to the first century. A non-literal reading of the days of creation is the majority view in Church history.

A Biblical Reading of the Days of Genesis 1

Historic views are sometimes helpful to understand, but the ultimate question about the proper understanding of creation cannot be answered by appeal to tradition. As James Jordan, a vocal young-earth advocate, points out:

It is, after all, always possible that “six-day creationism” has not properly understood the text of God’s revelation. We must always be open to the text above all else, and not blindly cling to familiar traditions, whatever they may be.³²

Some Church traditions are right and some are wrong. People have argued many contradictory things from Church history.

The first question to ask about the creation accounts is what kind of literature do we find in early Genesis? There is little debate that Genesis 1 involves Hebrew poetry. Over a hundred years ago, Terry noted that “not a few eminent scholars have called this first section of Genesis a poem.”³³ Some have called it “the inspired Psalm of Creation.”³⁴ The literary element of the early chapters of Genesis continues to be recognized in modern treatments as well:

Genesis 1 is clearly different in style from the later historical chapters of Genesis and the historical books, because of its poetic structure. To say it is “poetic” does not mean it is not true; it simply has the form of a poem, like the Psalms, in which words are sometimes used symbolically and generically.³⁵

The poetic structure of Genesis 1 is important to acknowledge. Poetry is a rich form of communication that we sometimes do not appreciate as moderns who live in a scientific age. It should be no surprise that the same young-earth creationists who demand a “literal” interpretation of Genesis 1 also demand a “literal” interpretation of another crucial *poetic* portion of Scripture: the book of Revelation.

Phillip Carrington points out this familiar problem with modern futurist interpretations of Revelation:

Many who are deficient in a sense of poetry and a sense of humor have tried their hands on the Apocalypse, and made a mess of it.³⁶

Is it possible that something similar has happened to modern “conservative” readings of Genesis 1? The best of biblical poetry is hardly literal: do we take Psalm 23 as referring literally to sheep, grass, and bubbling brooks? Psalm 23 is true *precisely because* it is entirely symbolic!

Evening and Morning

The goal in understanding Genesis 1 should not be to find the most “literal” interpretation. The primary goal should be to find the *biblical* interpretation. With that in mind let us go directly to the text:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. *God called the light Day*, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day. (Gen. 1:1-5 NKJV)

The very first argument literalists make is that the days must be ordinary 24-hour days we are familiar with because they include the indicators of “evening and morning.” But notice what the first denotation of “Day” is in the text. It is the *period of light*, which all agree is not a period of 24 hours.

Also consider the account *literally* says that the sun, moon and stars were not created until the fourth day (Gen. 1:14-19), so it is strange to think of “evening and morning” as we naturally do in our experience of sunset and sunrise. How do you have a literal evening and morning without a sun?

There is a better way to think about “evening and morning.” Rather than assuming we know exactly what that phrase must mean, literally, we should examine how *the Bible* uses that terminology. When we compare Scripture with Scripture, we find that “evening and morning” is an uncommon Hebraic phrase or figure of speech for an ongoing, *undefined* period of time. Moses uses similar terminology when he writes of the lamp stand in the tabernacle:

Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening until morning before the Lord. (Ex. 27:21 NKJV)

Moses is not talking about a 24-hour day, but a *perpetual* chore the Levites performed. Could it be that “evening and morning” is a Hebraic idiom for an undefined period of time?

This possibility becomes more obvious when we look at related and similar terms in other poetic texts of Scripture:

You carry them away like a flood; They are like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which grows up: In the morning it flourishes and grows up; In the evening it is cut down and withers. (Psalm 90:5-6 NKJV)

Does grass grow up to maturity in one day 24-hour day? No, the psalm refers to a season, an *undefined* amount of time as one day. James uses the same imagery we find in Psalm 90:5-6 to refer to the *lifetime* of wicked men in James 1:11.

Also consider how David uses the phrase “evening and morning”:

Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice. (Psalm 55:17 NKJV)

David refers to constant prayer and petition before God. He gives no defined time statement of 24 hours. If we want to understand the *biblical* meaning of “evening and morning,” we must consider the similarity of this language used elsewhere in the Bible. No interpretation of Genesis 1 is complete without comparing Scripture with Scripture.

Daniel gives another example in a poetic, prophetic text by saying:

And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days. (Dan. 8:26 KJV)

Modern translations of this passage turn the phrase into the plural, “evenings and mornings,” because of the recognition that Daniel speaks of a long time. Yet the Hebrew is singular – “evening and morning.” In Hebrew it is *identical* to the phrases we find in Genesis 1, but it is clear that Daniel cannot refer to one 24-hour day. Again, this is a long period of time (specifically 6-7 years if Dan. 8:14 is taken literally). Could it be that many literalize “evening and morning” in

Genesis 1 because they are unaware of the parallel use of that phrase in other portions of Scripture?

The “Literal” Conundrum in Genesis 1

The 24-hour day view not only ignores the wider biblical context of “evening and morning” language, it also wreaks havoc within Genesis 1. We have already alluded to the fact that the creation of light takes place on Day 1, yet the sun, moon, and stars are not created until Day 4. This order problem has warned Christians against a literal interpretation for centuries. Origen asks this question:

Now what man of intelligence will believe that the first, the second, and the third day, and evening and morning existed without the sun, moon, and stars?³⁷

Origen does not ask this question to “make room” for modern science. He speaks from the third century! He asks the question *directly from the text*. Augustine asked a similar question.

Another predicament arises when it is pointed out that literalists often depart from their own interpretive standard. Consider this strange statement by Jordan, a stalwart defender of a 24-hour reading of the days in Genesis:

I have also used the phrase “creation week,” even though *the actual act of creation happened all at once on the first day*. One might write of the “world-forming week.” Yet, in view of the fact that God “created” dinosaurs on the fifth day and “created” man on the sixth day, speaking of the entire week as “the creation week” seems valid. The reader should always bear in mind, however, that apart from these two creative acts, the other acts of God in Genesis 1 always involve reshaping *what had already been created in the beginning* [emphasis ours].³⁸

Where does Genesis 1 say *literally* that creation happened “all at once on the first day”? Would this not introduce a biblical self-contradiction? For the text says *literally* that the sun, moon and stars were created on Day 4. (Nowhere does it mention dinosaurs!)

Our point is not to say that James Jordan is wrong in the above citation. We might agree that all was created at once, but if the text is meant to be taken *literally*, then the literalist must pay attention to the literal *order of creation*. To abandon the creative order in Genesis 1 is to

abandon a literal interpretation. Literally speaking, Genesis simply cannot refer to the creation of all things “at once” at the beginning without turning the Bible against itself.

The Creation Week and the Sabbath

A further dilemma for the literalist is that Day 7 contains no reference to beginning or end: it has no “evening and morning.” Some interpreters suggest the reason is that Day 7 is God’s eternal rest which remains ongoing. Hebrews 4:4f makes an explicit connection to Day 7 of the creation week. *Hebrews associates God’s day of rest with the ultimate rest and promised land of Christ’s salvation.* This appears to suggest that the author of Hebrews knew that Day 7 did not end after 24 hours, but remains ongoing.

No matter how we understand the meaning of the omission of “evening and morning” during Day 7, the *literal* fact is that Day 7 is *different* than the other days in some sense. Of course, that means Day 7 *cannot* be a 24-hour day, by the standard of the literalist. And if Day 7 is not a 24-hour day, then we have good reason to believe that none of them were intended to be understood as ordinary days. How is it possible to have a *literal* week with days of unequal duration?

The biblical text illuminates a great irony at this point in the debate. Seventh Day Adventists adamantly defend a 24-hour reading of the creation days in order to defend their “literal” seventh day sabbatarian views. However, Day 7 is the only day without the “evening and morning” indicators they claim proves a 24-hour interpretation!

The uniqueness of Day 7 presents a problem for the common young-earth creationist argument for ordinary days based on the fourth commandment:

For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth,
the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day.
Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed
it. (Ex. 20:11 NKJV)

The argument, originally developed by Adventists, is that Exodus 20:11 *demand*s that we read the days literally in Genesis. The reasoning is that since the sabbath day is explicitly patterned after creation, the days in Genesis 1 *must* be 24-hour days.

The problem with this argument is that the sabbath in the Law of Moses was not merely a 24-hour day! The sabbath was also the seventh *year*. That sabbath was based on the creation pattern in Genesis 1 as

surely as the weekly sabbath *day*. Furthermore, Jubilee was the year of completion of seven cycles of 7 *years* for a total 50-year span. The Law itself was given on or near pentecost, a special sabbath that followed a week of sabbaths after passover (Ex. 19:1, Lev 23:16). The variety of the sabbaths in the Law of Moses (all of which relate to creation in Genesis 1) demonstrates that the length of a creation day must be quite flexible in the creation account.

We find an additional problem for a rigid literalism at the beginning of Genesis 2 where we find:

This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. (Gen. 2:4 NKJV)

Notice that the entire creation week is now compared to one “day.” The Hebrew word for day, *yom*, is the same in Genesis 2:4 as we find for “day” all through Genesis 1. Which one is literal? Literalism is arbitrary in its definition of “day” in the account. How can seven days be one day in the history of God’s creation of the heavens and earth?

Genesis 1 vs. Genesis 2, Literally

If we do not begin our investigation of the creation texts by acknowledging that the creation account (in Genesis 1 at least) is poetic, then more problems surface. The trouble is not only the fact that Genesis 1 makes no literal sense. Young-earth creationism implies that Genesis 1 *literally* contradicts Genesis 2. What has become the traditional, young-earth view among conservatives posits that Genesis 1 and 2 are parallel accounts which speak about the same physical events. In the words of Jordan:

Traditionally (and correctly, I submit), Genesis 2 is seen as an expansion of the sixth day of Genesis 1... What Genesis 1 says about the entire earth is repeated with reference to man, Eden, and the Garden. This can be seen in that the structure of the two passages is the same, the second building on the first. To wit: Genesis 2:4 is parallel to Genesis 1:1.³⁹

According to Genesis 1, man is created last on Day 6. Clearly, plants and animals pre-date human beings if we take the order of the account literally. But notice what we find in Genesis 2:

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed (Gen.2:7-8 NKJV)

Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. (Gen. 2:15 NKJV)

And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. (Gen. 2:18-20 NKJV)

Notice that the order of creation is entirely reversed in Genesis 2. Man was made *first*. *Then* a garden was planted for him to "tend and keep." *Then* the Lord God formed "every beast of the field" and "every bird of the air." If both passages were meant to be plain literal historical narratives, they reveal a direct contradiction. Literalism pits Genesis 1 against Genesis 2.

To remedy this apparent contradiction, some have suggested that Genesis 1 and 2 reference entirely separate events. One dispensational writer presents the literal view that God created the general race of humanity in Genesis 1:27, and created a distinct race of "Adamites" in Genesis 2:7.⁴⁰ His view is by far more "literal" than the young-earth creationist who argues for a literal interpretation while claiming Genesis 1 and 2 reference the same creation event. Genesis 1 and 2 are, literally speaking, incompatible.

Day 6 – The First Long Day?

Another flaw revealed by a close examination of what the text literally says has to do with timing. Both Adam and Eve were created on Day 6 in Genesis 1:27. (Remember, young-earth creationists claim this *must* be a 24-hour day.) But note in the above passage all of the activities that Genesis 2 says took place *between* the creation of Adam and Eve.

1. God made Adam.

2. God *planted* trees which grew into a garden.
3. God told Adam to “tend and keep” the garden.
4. God formed the animals for companionship for Adam.
5. God then brought all the animals before Adam who carefully observed and named them all.
6. Adam realized the deficiency in the animals as a suitable help-meet for himself.
7. God put the man to sleep and removed a rib.
8. God went away and formed the woman.
9. God eventually brought the woman back to man.

How on earth is all this activity physically possible in one 24-hour day? The observing and naming of all the animals alone would take a very long time. Especially when we consider that these are the same animals that young-earth creationism claims Noah took on the ark. Would not this have to be many thousands of animals, all to be observed and individually named during a *portion* of a 24-hour day? We must not forget that Adam had to have spent some time in obedience to God’s command to “tend and keep” the garden before animals appear on the scene!

There is no reason to believe the activity in Genesis 2 took place in one 24-hour day. This is *biblical* evidence that the days in Genesis 1 were *never* intended to be read “literally” as ordinary, 24-hour days. Francis Schaeffer lends wise advice for those who insist, with dogmatic certainty, that the days in Genesis 1 must mean a 24-hour length of time:

What does day mean in the days of creation? The answer must be held with some openness. In Genesis 5:2 we read: “Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.” As it is clear that Adam and Eve were not created simultaneously, day in Genesis 5:2 does not mean a period of twenty-four hours.

In other places in the Old Testament the Hebrew word day refers to an era, just as it often does in English. See, for example, Isaiah 2:11,12 and 17 for such a usage.

The simple fact is that day in Hebrew (just as in English) is used in three separate senses: to mean (1) twenty-four hours, (2) the period of light during the twenty-four hours, and (3) an indeterminate period of time. Therefore, we must leave open the exact length of time indicated by day in Genesis.⁴¹

At the very least, all of these details in the text should moderate the dogmatism with which many promote a 24-hour day interpretation of the creation week. Those who do not accept a 24-hour interpretation have legitimate biblical reasons for their understanding.

“Generations” and “This Generation”

Perhaps the most interesting element we find in the creation account is that the history of God’s creation of the “heavens and earth” involves “generations”:

These are the *generations* of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. (Gen. 2:4 KJV)

Some modern translations substitute “history” for “generations” in this passage, but the Hebrew text says “generations” as the King James Version (and more literal translations) rightly shows. What is more, the generations of God’s creation match a pattern in early Genesis:

The form of this verse is used several times in the book of Genesis... All the later occurrences refer to the generations, that is, offspring, of people.⁴²

The fact that “generations” (plural) appears in the creation account has tremendous implications for the proper interpretation of creation. Hugh Ross explains by saying:

Hebrew lexicons verify that the word for generation (*toledah*) refers to the time between a person’s birth and parenthood, or to a... longer time span. In Genesis 2:4 the plural form, *generations*, is used, indicating that multiple generations have passed.⁴³

The conclusion seems clear. If the history of the heavens and earth involved “generations,” then we should understand that God’s creation

took a great deal of time. The text doesn't tell us how many generations; it leaves the issue open-ended.

The "generations" of God's creation in Genesis 2:4 highlights another connection between debates over Genesis and biblical prophecy. What about when Jesus said:

Assuredly, I say to you, *this generation* will by no means pass away till all these things take place. (Matt. 24:34 NKJV)

If "generations" is a *time indicator* in Genesis 2:4, then "this generation" in Matthew 24:34 is a *time indicator* for the fulfillment of prophecy. If generations (plural) implies the passing of *multiple* generations, then "this generation" (singular) implies *one* generation.

This common old-earth creationist argument from Genesis 2:4 implies a preterist view of prophecy. Or we could state the connection between Genesis 2:4 and Matthew 24:34 this way. When old-earth creationists argue that "this generation" can mean thousands of years of time since Jesus made the statement or a generation totally removed from Jesus by thousands of years, they imply biblical references to "this generation" or "generations" are *meaningless*. If "this generation" does not mean *one* generation, the generation to whom Jesus spoke originally, then perhaps "generations" can mean six 24-hour days. Surely, if "generations" (plural) means anything in Genesis 2:4, "this generation" (singular) means something in Matthew 24:34!

Out of necessity young-earth creationism ignores the significance of the "generations" of God's creation. Their six 24-hour day creation doctrine forces them to believe "generations" is merely the duration of one ordinary week. Their 24-hour day interpretation turns the obvious *time indicator* in Genesis 2:4 "generations" into an irrelevant, elastic, and meaningless statement. Since they overlook the fact that "generations" in Genesis 2:4 is a *time indicator* in what they take as the history of God's creation of the universe, they likewise overlook the fact that "this generation" is a time indicator in Matthew 24:34.

The young-earth creationist method of neutralizing the meaning of "generations" in Genesis 2:4 provides the methodological foundation for a futurist reading prophecy in the New Testament. They turn "generations" (plural) into six ordinary days in Genesis and "this generation" into thousands of years or a separate generation to come after a "gap" of thousands of years from the time Jesus said "this generation." All in the name of literalism! This example demonstrates one more dimension

of how the interpretive principles of young-earth creationism lead directly to futurism on the other side of the Bible. Young-earth creationism wars against a preterist view of prophecy from the very beginning of the Bible to the very end.

CHAPTER 14

COVENANT CREATION

Christian theologians have long recognized a connection between Genesis and Revelation. Author Craig Hill explains the relationship this way:

Although eschatology is technically about the “end,” most eschatologies are heavily dependent on a doctrine of creation. The end will be as the beginning.¹

In Chapters 11 and 12 we highlighted the *theological* connection between the beginning and the end in relation to the fall of Adam and redemption of Christ. Just as the fall of Adam relates to the moral world of man’s covenant relationship to God, so the redemption of Christ restores that broken relationship for all those in Christ who is the “last Adam.” The curse placed upon Adam in Genesis is removed in Revelation for all those who are “in Christ,” i.e., those who dwell in the holy city and have access to the tree of life. Jesus, through his finished work of salvation, defeated “the death” brought into the world by Adam.



Covenant: Genesis to Revelation

We believe it would be a mistake to limit the relationship between Genesis and Revelation to redemptive theology. There is a wider link between the opening and closing books of the Bible. Milton Terry, the noted authority on biblical hermeneutics, points out the significance and relationship of these two biblical books:

It is a most remarkable revelation to stand at the beginning of the Holy Scriptures, and it is well for us, at this early stage of our apocalyptic studies, to point out the fact that the last prophetic book of the canon makes conspicu-

ous use of the symbols and suggestions of the first three chapters of Genesis, and seems divinely adapted to stand as its final counterpart.²

What Genesis does, Revelation undoes. The story begun in Genesis concludes in Revelation. This relationship has inevitable consequences for the right understanding of the opening chapters of Genesis.

Perhaps it would be helpful to say at this point that the consistent theme of the Bible is covenant. It frames all the historical events and stories we find in the Bible. If the biblical “end” is defined foremost by covenant, then logically, the biblical “beginning” must be defined in the same manner. Preterism – also known as “covenant eschatology” in some circles – implies a symmetrical and compatible *covenant* view of creation. It is simply inconsistent to believe Genesis is given primarily as a statement about the creation of the physical universe, and then claim biblical prophecy is geared toward a *covenant* end. That approach severs the organic connection between Genesis and Revelation.

We suggest the central focus of Genesis creation is the same as the central focus of biblical prophecy: God’s covenant relationship with man. There may be physical events referenced in the creation account, just as Revelation references physical events in the first century. But the main subject of the opening chapters of Genesis is not a historical record of the formation of the physical universe. The main subject is God’s covenant relationship to all things. We believe the opening chapters of Genesis are primarily a *covenant statement*, not a scientific account of the origin of the physical universe. We begin our presentation of creation by introducing a consistent *covenant* view of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

The Scientific Literal Approach to Genesis

The covenant view of creation stands in contrast to most modern views of creation no matter what they conclude about the age of the universe. Consider the driving assumption of both young-earth and old-earth views of Genesis in our day. What we know of as “literal” interpretations of Genesis assume automatically that Genesis was given to provide a scientifically precise description of God’s creation of the physical universe. Regardless of the conclusions offered, the literalness of the creation account is assumed to translate into *scientific* communication as if Genesis was written originally in the prose of a scientific journal. Literalists tend to assume, without question or self-evaluation,

that Genesis was written primarily to answer *scientific* questions and solve *scientific* controversies. Henry Morris demonstrates this “scientific” literalism:

But there was still the problem of the age of the earth and the geological column. If this could be settled anywhere, it would have to be in Scripture... It seemed impossible that God would have left such an important matter as this, with such profound ramifications in so many areas of life and study, unsettled in His Word... Surely God has the answer in His Word.³

This approach to Genesis begs a question about the original audience and context of the creation accounts. If Genesis was written to settle the issue of the geological column, then what about the many centuries before anyone asked questions related to modern geology? Morris assumes Genesis was written as plain historical narrative in modern terms and was given for the purpose of answering scientific questions and priorities.

How many young-earth creationists follow in his steps? Young-earth creationists often fail to consider that their approach to Genesis is a *result* of the very modernism and scientism they deride constantly. Virtually every young-earth creationist book levels this charge in one form or another:

The first chapter of Genesis has been the focal point of heated controversy. Modern science and scientism have confronted biblical theology.⁴

Like so many others, however, this author seems blind to the fact that modern science and scientism have profoundly influenced his own approach to Genesis. The same author argues on the next page that Genesis is to be understood *scientifically* and, therefore, “literally”:

Rightly understood, however, the text does not represent a scientific impossibility and, therefore, can be accepted on literal grounds.⁵

Blinded by modern debates over origins, few see the self-contradiction at this point. A central argument common to all young-earth creationist literature is that those who make God’s Word conform to

modern science are unfaithful to God's Word. Some authors phrase the charge this way:

[W]e should be wary of those who accommodate Scripture to current scientific theory, because he who marries the spirit of the age will be a widower in the next.⁶

Yet it is precisely modern science and scientism that drives the young-earth creationist to read the text as a *scientific* statement! Young-earth creationism forces Genesis to conform to young-earth "science," flood geology and all. It marries Genesis to their own scientific theory as surely as their opponents marry Genesis to a different scientific theory. The truth is Genesis is married to *the rest of the Bible*, not to modern science!

Young-earth creationism is a right-wing form of *modernism* and *scientism* unique to the modern age. The question is never asked about whether or not the original audience of Genesis was concerned about modern scientific theories and controversies that tend to consume the time, energy, and interest of young-earth creationism. (Note how the same audience relevance issues are ignored by most young-earth creationists in regard to biblical prophecy on the opposite end of the Bible.)

Popular old-earth creationist views, which predate the young-earth 24-hour-day approach, manifest a different version of the same problem. Hugh Ross and Gleason Archer assume Genesis gives a scientific account of God's creation in their definition of the day-age view of Genesis 1. Notice the connection between their "literal" standard and the assumed scientific *nature* of Genesis 1:

Our day-age interpretation treats the creation days literally as six sequential, long periods of time. Integrating biblical and scientific data, we assert that the physical creation events reported in Genesis appear in correct sequence and in scientifically defensible terms.⁷

In other words, the first chapter of Genesis is a "report" of facts similar to what might be written observations from a modern science laboratory. One of the implicit assumptions of modern day-age advocates is that if the creation account is not communicated and defensible in *scientific* terms, then it is not *true*. Like the young-earth creationist,

they reason that way because modern science and scientism drives their interpretation of Genesis.

Milton Terry dispatched similar day-age approaches which were very popular in the middle of the 19th century. In 1867, one of his contemporaries wrote that “the creative chapter was designed at the outset to confirm the truth of the sacred narrative in a remote skeptical age.” Terry responds:

[O]ne is at a loss to conjecture its real value for the many generations who perused it during the intervening millenniums, and may marvel still more to observe that after this long waiting it has so slight an influence on the average skeptic! The radical fallacy of all these pompous claims is the tacit assumption that the Scriptures were designed to anticipate the discoveries of science.⁸

Many involved in the Genesis debate overlook the fundamental similarity between the scientism of young-earth creationism and the scientism of popular forms of old-earth creationism. Their conflicting beliefs about what Genesis “literally” says may be worlds apart, but their *method of handling Genesis in the light of modern scientific questions and priorities is identical*. They are methodological twins. Conrad Hyers notes the problem with all forms of “scientific” literalism in Genesis:

[I]n its consuming passion to be faithful to the Scriptures, it turns attention away from the central religious concerns of the biblical authors and focuses it on issues that are largely modern and secular. It exchanges its spiritual and symbolic birthright for a mess of tangible pottage.⁹

In other words the focus is turned from God’s covenant relationship with his people to a record of the formation of planet Earth as we know it. Is it any surprise that the covenant theme of Scripture is widely neglected by modern Christians when they approach the Bible from its opening verse in this manner?

Scientific Literalism: Beginning to End

The scientific focus of literalism explains why both young-earth creationism and popular forms of old-earth creationism embrace global futurism. Futurism disconnects biblical prophecy from its Christ-centered, redemption-focused context. Futurism reads biblical prophecy in

light of modern technology, culture, and global fears – planetary concerns. Those who begin with “scientific” literalism in Genesis logically expect Revelation to give a “scientific” literal record of events related to the end of planet Earth and the physical universe.

There is no question that the “scientific” literalists are consistent in how they handle the Bible from Genesis to Revelation; the question is whether this is the right way to handle Scripture. Terry sums up the best criticism of science-driven interpretations of typical views of Genesis creation:

We gain nothing for the honor of the Scriptures by attempting to force upon them a meaning they were never intended to convey.¹⁰

The same warning applies to global futurist interpretations of prophecy. It is worth repeating that futurists tend to rip passages like Matthew 24 and texts in Revelation out of their *biblical* contexts and apply them directly to modern-day scientific technologies and cultural contexts. The interpretive implications for “scientific” literalism are the same whether we speak about Genesis or Revelation. Wrong conclusions are inevitable regarding both ends of the Bible when the starting point is “scientific” literalism.

The Biblical Literal Approach to Genesis

There is an alternative approach that appreciates Genesis on its own terms rather than forcing modern scientific questions and concerns onto the biblical text. The solution begins by recognizing the *type of literature* we find in the early chapters of Genesis. We reiterate David Chilton’s statement again because it is crucial to consider as we approach both Genesis and Revelation:

The Bible is *literature*: it is divinely-inspired and inerrant literature, but it is literature all the same. This means we must *read* it as literature.... We cannot understand what the Bible really (literally) means unless we appreciate its use of literary styles.¹¹

Many do not realize that a true literal interpretation of Genesis (and Revelation) may include interpretations which are diametrically opposed to “scientific” literalism. The word “literal” actually comes from the same root as our word “literature.” Speaking literally, the most “lit-

eral” interpretation is the one that is most in keeping with the “literature” we find in early Genesis! Of course, the modern definition of “literal” interpretation has wandered from the older definition of “literal” interpretation in terms of the literary context. This is another example of how language tends to change over time, but a true *literal* interpretation depends on the *nature of the literature* in question. For example, Augustine gave this as his understanding of the days of Genesis in his 5th-century book titled *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*:

But at least we know that it [the creation day] is different from the ordinary day with which we are familiar.¹²

Why would Augustine claim his interpretation as the literal meaning of the days in Genesis 1? Because he understood “the narrative is no more a treatise on natural science than it is an almanac.”¹³ Without a doubt, Augustine would define modern “scientific” readings of Genesis 1 as *non-literal* because they *violate* the literary genre he saw in Genesis 1. The view of the first chapters of Genesis we offer to the reader in the following pages is compatible with and an expansion upon Augustine’s view. We would call it the “biblical literal” approach to Genesis.*

Creation and Prophecy

Terry rightly opens his discussion on Genesis with a crucial point:

Any satisfactory interpretation of Genesis must be preceded by a DETERMINATION OF THE CLASS OF LITERATURE TO WHICH IT BELONGS.¹⁴

Our first question to answer, if we wish to understand Genesis on its own terms, is this: **What kind of literature do we find in early Genesis?**

The *biblical* answer to that question is not our unaided assumptions about what type of literature the early chapters of Genesis *should* be. Nor is the *biblical* answer gained by asking what science says about the origin of the universe. The question can be answered *biblically* only by a comparison of the early chapters of Genesis to other portions of Scripture that bear a striking resemblance to the style, imagery, poetry, structure and content we find in the early chapters of Genesis. The *biblical* answer is to compare Scripture with Scripture, Genesis with the

* See Appendix A for an extended discussion of the interpretive approach we use throughout this book.

rest of the Bible, in order to determine the class of literature we find in Genesis.

What do we find in the early chapters of Genesis? What obvious elements give us clues about the literary genre? Chilton notes the presence of *prophecy* in Genesis 3:15:

[T]he same is true of the prophets: They, also, spoke in figures and symbols, drawing on a rich heritage of Biblical images that began in the Garden of Eden.

Indeed, *Paradise is where prophecy began*. It is worth noting that the very first promise of the coming Redeemer was stated in highly symbolic terms. God said to the Serpent:

I will put enmity
Between you and the woman
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall crush your head,
And you shall strike His heel. (Gen. 3:15)

Obviously, this is not simply “history written in advance.” It is a symbolic statement, very much of a piece with the evocative, poetic language used throughout the Bible, and especially in Revelation [emphasis ours].¹⁵

The link Chilton makes between the *literary style* of Genesis and biblical prophecy (especially Revelation) is very important. Terry drew a similar comparison a century earlier:

But if these opening chapters of the Bible are a revelation of God’s creative *relation* to the world, may they not be apocalyptical in character? Is it not fitting that the canon of Scripture should open as well as close with an apocalypse [emphasis ours]?¹⁶

Notice that Terry suggests the creation account is primarily covenantal; a revelation of God’s *relation* to the world. It is important to realize that Terry is no liberal theologian. Even today, his books on the principles of biblical hermeneutics continue to be used in conservative seminaries and Bible colleges of many different theological persuasions. Kenneth Gentry, an extremely conservative preterist theologian, calls Terry a devout believer in “evangelical, supernaturalistic orthodoxy.”¹⁷ Though Terry recognizes developments in modern science as legiti-

mate, Terry does not make his suggestion in terms of modern science or evolution, but because of a careful, self-conscious evaluation of *the nature of biblical language in early Genesis*.

The Apocalyptic Nature of Creation

The significance of Terry's suggestion (and Chilton's implication) is that the early chapters of Genesis come to us in apocalyptic* style. This is not to say that Genesis matches the formal style of Jewish apocalyptic writings common to the inter-testament period thousands of years after the origin of Genesis. Chilton made a case that *none* of the inter-testamental literature, formally labeled as "apocalyptic," compares with biblical prophetic literature:

The Book of Revelation is often treated as an example of the "apocalyptic" genre of writings which flourished among the Jews between 200 B.C. and A.D. 100. There is no basis for this opinion whatsoever, and it is unfortunate that the word *apocalyptic* is used at all to describe this literature. (The writers of "apocalyptic" themselves never used the term in this sense; rather, scholars have stolen the term from St. John, who called his book "The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ.") There are, in fact, many major differences between the "apocalyptic" writings and the Book of Revelation.

The "apocalyptists" expressed themselves in unexplained and unintelligible symbols, and generally had no intention of making themselves really understood. Their writings abound in pessimism: no real progress is possible, nor will there be any victory for God and His people in history. We cannot even see God acting in history. All we know is the world is getting worse and worse. The best we can do is hope for the End – soon....

St. John's approach in the Revelation is vastly different. His symbols are not obscure ravings hatched from a fevered imagination; they are rooted firmly in the Old Testament (and the reason for their *seeming* obscurity is that very fact: We have trouble understanding them only because we don't know our Bibles). In contrast to the apocalyptists,

* We use the term "apocalyptic" in its older sense of "unveiling" or "disclosure" rather than the common use related to the topic of the end of the world.

who had given up on history, John presents history as the scene of divine redemption....

The apocalyptists said: *The world is coming to an end: Give up!* The Biblical prophets said: *The world is coming to a beginning: Get to work!*

Thus, the Book of Revelation is not an apocalyptic tract; it is, instead, as St. John himself reminds us repeatedly, a prophecy (1:3; 10:11; 22:7, 10, 18-19), completely in keeping with the writings of the other Biblical prophets.¹⁸

If Chilton is correct in his observations, then the modern technical definition of apocalyptic encourages an error. This definition is based on Jewish writings unique to the intertestamental time period. The mistake occurs when biblical examples are classified in the same category as this intertestamental apocalyptic genre. Chilton implies that *only biblical prophecy* can rightly be considered apocalyptic. What many consider to be one specific category of literature (apocalyptic genre) is actually two distinct forms of literature; Jewish writings common to the intertestamental period are not of the same nature as biblical prophecy.

Terry also drew a clear line of demarcation between biblical examples of apocalyptic communication and the Jewish inter-testament "apocalyptic" genre:

Little help for valid exposition is to be found in the apocryphal apocalypses. They are all at best but weak imitations, and move in a lower realm of thought. There is no evidence that the biblical revelations were in any considerable degree dependent upon that class of literature.¹⁹

Terry did not associate biblical apocalyptic communication with the apocalyptic class we consider "apocalyptic genre" today. Another key point is that biblical apocalyptic communication *pre-dates* what has come to be known formally as "apocalyptic genre." Terry shows how the structure of apocalyptic exists in various texts from Genesis through the prophets and on to the New Testament:

We have seen, however, in the first half of this volume that the formal elements of apocalyptic writing are found in the older Hebrew literature, and that the books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Joel contain some of the finest specimens.²⁰

We use the term “apocalyptic” in this book in a wider, more general sense than the technical definition applied by modern scholars to Jewish writings of the intertestament period. We suggest, in agreement with Milton Terry, that the early chapters of Genesis are *prophetic* in nature; they are not historical narrative such as we find in the gospel genre in Scripture or historical, evidential books such as 1 Chronicles or Acts. Our preterist (or we could say covenantal) view of the Bible leads us to suggest the connection between Genesis and Revelation includes a *literary* link; the literary genre we find in early Genesis *matches* the prophetic genre in Revelation and other prophetic texts.

Among many other things, preterism represents an advance in understanding the *nature* and *redemptive function* of biblical prophecy. This advance is ultimately rooted in the biblical way preterism handles the prophetic and apocalyptic language we find in Scripture. Preterism illuminates an important fact: the prophetic portions of Scripture are a distinguishable literary style which must be interpreted on its own terms. We believe this unique preterist insight, over the long run, will have tremendous implications for Christian interpretation of the earliest chapters of Genesis. Genesis offers God’s people a prophetic account of creation in rich poetic and symbolic form.

Just as biblical prophecy communicates through the big picture of Hebraic apocalyptic poetry, so the early chapters of Genesis follow the same form and structure. Genesis opens as prophecy in reverse to the degree that the creation account references physical events in the past. The first chapters are a grand disclosure of this past given for the central purpose of evoking covenant love and faithfulness in the present.

Apocalyptic Past?

That may be a strange way of looking at biblical apocalyptic language, but there are other examples of prophetic texts which communicate *past* historical events. Consider a portion of Habakkuk’s prayer:

You uncovered your *bow*, you called for many arrows. Selah You split the earth with rivers; the mountains saw you and writhed. Torrents of water swept by; the deep roared and lifted its waves on high. Sun and moon stood still in the heavens *at the glint of your flying arrows*, at the lightning of your flashing spear. (Hab. 3:9-11 NIV)

Note that Habakkuk refers to real historical events in Israel's past. He recounts the exodus, the Red Sea crossing, and conquest of Canaan. Is this a literal record of plain history? No. It is history communicated in poetic, apocalyptic style. It may seem strange to think of Genesis creation as "prophecy in reverse," but many biblical prophets recount history in poetic imagery and form. Another example is David's apocalyptic rendition of his life story found in Psalm 18.

The Apocalyptic Focus

But in saying that Genesis offers "prophecy in reverse" in communicating God's creation we must not forget that apocalyptic literature, whether oriented forward or backward, is concerned *primarily* with the moral world and human action. As David Chilton writes:

Biblical prophecy is not "prediction" in the occult sense of Nostrodamus, Edgar Cayce, and Jean Dixon... The purpose of prophecy is not "prediction," but evaluation of man's ethical response to God's Word.²¹

The central issue is covenant faithfulness, not science. If it can be proved the early chapters of Genesis are apocalyptic (or we might say prophetic), then they were *never* intended as a *scientific description* of God's creation of the universe. B.B. Warfield also notes what would be the natural implication of an apocalyptic view of creation:

We must try to keep fresh in our minds the great principle that all prophecy is ethical in its purpose, and that this ethical end controls not only what shall be revealed in general, but also the details of it, and the very form which it takes.²²

The early chapters of Genesis order the lives of God's people and set the pattern for human life in God's world, both vertically (God-ward) and horizontally (between human beings). The creation account defines the outline of faithful covenant living in God's world and God's covenant relation to his people, including his work of salvation in their lives.

Bernard Ramm makes a similar point:

The main purpose of Genesis is theological and religious. This has been said innumerable times already, but there is the temptation to get too involved in the details of science and to forget it. The theological purpose of the passage is

negative and positive. *Negatively*, it is a prohibition of idolatry. The creature is created and not worthy of adoration. Creation makes idolatry an impossibility, when creation is rightly understood. *Positively*, the chapter teaches that the universe has its origins in God and reveals in a magnificent way God's power, God's spirituality, God's wisdom, and God's goodness.²³

These early chapters of Genesis are geared to a *moral* purpose in much the same way that the curse and redemption apply to the *moral world* of man. Again, we simply press the issue consistently. If the curse is man-centered, related to the moral world of man in covenant with God, then why not the creation also? It is a profound inconsistency to believe the curse and redemption relate primarily to the *moral* realm of man and simultaneously claim that creation gives us a *scientific* description of the origin of the *physical universe*!

The creation account is made of one whole cloth that cannot be ripped into two incongruous portions; the first being a scientific description of the formation of the physical universe and the second being the revelation of a curse that does not alter the physical creation. The creation account, like the fall recorded in Genesis 3, is primarily a covenantal statement; therefore, it is prophetic rather than scientific. As James Montgomery Boice writes:

What do we find when we turn to the opening chapter of Genesis? Here the Christian view is stated for the first time and in definitive form. It is a theological statement, however, and we must acknowledge this because if we do not, we will inevitably find ourselves looking for a scientific explanation and be misled... Genesis 1 is not a description from which we can expect to find answers to purely scientific questions. Rather, it is a statement of origins in the area of meanings, purpose and the relationship of all things to God.²⁴

If the creation is a covenant statement portrayed in an apocalyptic form of communication, then it must be interpreted by the same rules we apply to biblical prophecy. Preterist author Kurt Simmons notes the peculiar literary style common to the prophets:

The language of the prophets by its very definition is veiled and obscure; it is marked by poetic imagery, license, and

exaggeration, and is impressed with hyperbole, metaphors, and symbols.²⁵

We must remember this style of communication as we approach the early chapters of Genesis. But here we have a strange situation. Many who clamor for a “scientific” literal reading of Genesis forget that Genesis comes to us from the original authors through Moses *the prophet*. The degree of influence Moses had on Genesis as we have it is something we cannot know. Whatever the influence, we should recognize that his (as well as the original authors’) concern was *not* the geological column. His (as well as the original authors’) concern centered on the details of the faithful covenant life of God’s holy people in true worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

An apocalyptic view of creation implies that the interpretive rules for the early chapters of Genesis are the same rules to follow when interpreting the prophets. This has been argued for many years by a surprising number of Christian theologians:

Therefore, we come into possession of the very important hermeneutical rule that representations of *pre-Adamite* developments, founded upon revelations, must be viewed from the same standpoint, and interpreted according to the same laws, as prophecies and sketches of *future times* and developments, founded also upon revelation... [The creation record] consists of prophetic-historical tableaux, which are represented before the eye of the mind, scenes from the creative activity of God, each one of which represents some grand division of the great drama, some prominent phase of development. One scene unfolds itself after another before the vision of the *prophet*, until at length, with the seventh, the historical progress is fully represented to him.²⁶

Another author offers a similar thought about the early chapters of Genesis:

We have always held that, apart altogether from questions of authorship, it ought to be interpreted as the visions of the prophets are interpreted; in other words, to be classed with those portions of Jewish literature whose mission was to teach in symbols.²⁷

Though this apocalyptic view of Genesis creation may sound strange at first glance in our modern, scientific context, there were other *preterist* theologians in the 19th century besides Milton Terry who handled Genesis symbolically. Notice how the famous preterist scholar, Frederic W. Farrar, applied a symbolic and highly prophetic interpretation to Genesis in the same vein as his preterist interpretation of Revelation:

There is no other Eastern book in the world which we should have dreamed of understanding literally if it introduced speaking serpents and magic trees. Even the rabbis, stupidly literal as were their frequent methods, were perfectly aware that the story of the fall was a philosopheme – a vivid pictorial representation of the origin and growth of sin in the human heart.²⁸

Farrar engages the rich poetic symbolism in early Genesis. This is an apocalyptic view of Genesis. The details and images used in the early chapters of Genesis are symbolic of spiritual truth and relate to the covenant world of mankind. Farrar saw similar meanings for similar images that return in John's prophecy in the last book of the Bible. Farrar knew better, as a preterist, than to postulate that Genesis offers a prosaic, detailed, *scientific* account of how God created the universe. Farrar suggests that Genesis is a grand revelation of what God's creation of the universe *means*.

Preliminary Objections

In the next chapter we offer the reader an introductory demonstration of the clear literary links to prophetic portions of Scripture (especially to Revelation) as well as prophetic elements in the first chapters of Genesis. But before we offer this textual comparison we need to deal with a couple of preliminary objections so that our view is not misunderstood.

Does Apocalyptic Exclude Historical Events?

Because Christians still live in the shadow of the liberal/fundamentalist controversy, some Christians remain very shy when it comes to accepting symbolism, hyperbole, and metaphor as an essential part of the story of Scripture. Conservatives have, rightly or wrongly, been habituated to suspect any interpretation which deviates from the plain

“literal” reading as a concession to liberal skepticism and unbelief. A typical response sounds like this:

In the last three decades the pressure of “scientific opinion” has increased to the point that some biblical scholars have made sweeping concessions, abandoning a literal interpretation of the text in favor of a mythical or poetic interpretation. The latter hermeneutic permits the interpreter to make the Genesis material fit the current theory. This procedure is not particularly new. In fact it was advocated by the old liberalism [emphasis ours]...²⁹

Although it is a minor point, Terry and Farrar lived a hundred years before this author penned these words. In fact, these preterist, old-earth theologians *predate* the liberal/fundamentalist divide entirely. Their advantage, in comparison to us, is that they did not work in the shadow of *either* liberalism or fundamentalism. They were free to accept prophetic symbolism in Genesis without conflict from the fundamentalist camp. They were also free to accept Genesis as a legitimate account of genuine historicity without conflict from the liberal camp. Our demonstration will attempt to show that both Terry and Farrar accepted the *biblical* view of Genesis.

The key to answering the common charge represented in the above citation is that, as we have already pointed out, a *literal* interpretation depends on the type of *literary genre* we find in early Genesis. Notice that the author above has inexplicably assumed that symbolic interpretations are *incompatible* with historical events. The simplistic choice presented is that the reader must accept *either* a “literal” interpretation related to events which really happened in history *or* a non-historical mythical or poetic interpretation. Liberalism and fundamentalism begin with the same either/or view of the relationship between symbolism and history.

Those who think carefully about the issue will recognize this as a false dichotomy. The author of the above citation may hold a “literal history vs. mythological allegory” dichotomy in common with his liberal opponents (who accept the opposing side of the dichotomy), but he does not hold the “history vs. symbolism” dichotomy in common with us. We reject the assumption that a poetic, prophetic interpretation of Genesis is necessarily “non-historical.” The biblical text can communicate by prophetic symbolism *and* reference historical events at the same time. *This is precisely what biblical prophecy does.*

The concern that a prophetic view of creation relegates the early chapters of Genesis to anti-historical myth is unfounded. Biblical prophecy, though symbolic and poetic in its literary style, *always* relates to historical events. Consider the prophecy given in Genesis 3:15 concerning the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent. It is given in heavily symbolic, poetic form, yet it came to pass, ultimately, with the crucifixion of Christ in the first century. John even captures some of the imagery in Genesis by highlighting the location of the crucifixion: Golgotha – the place of the skull (John 19:17). The visual image is as historically graphic as Genesis 3:15 is symbolic. It is as if the very cross itself, planted on top of the hill, pierced the head of the serpent.

When we compare the crucifixion to Genesis 3:15 it is evident that it did not affect merely Christ's heel, nor did it involve a literal snake: those things are *symbolic* because they are *prophetic*. The historical crucifixion scene bristled with meaning for those who knew the symbolism of Genesis 3:15 by heart. The same is true for God's people today who view the crucifixion as *fulfilled prophecy* originating in Genesis 3:15. Prophecy *always* relates to historical events. Genesis is no different.

Our covenant view of creation (in conjunction with our covenant view of the "end") incorporates and *enhances* the historical dimension of Genesis. The pattern is the apocalyptic examples we find elsewhere in Scripture. Consider that portions of Matthew 24 and Revelation come to us in prophetic, apocalyptic language. Does this mean they are not historical? No. To the contrary, they *do* have reference to the contemporary historical experience of the early Church, and relate to first-century events culminating in the final destruction of Judea and Jerusalem in AD 70. To say the biblical text is apocalyptic is to *affirm* that historical events underlie the symbolism.

At the same time, the over-riding concern so evident in Matthew 24 and Revelation is theological: they encourage covenant faithfulness, perseverance, and obedience in the midst of trials and persecution. As such, they apply to all generations of God's people no matter their particular historical context. God does not change, so there is no reason to believe the principles of his covenant relationship to his people changes.

A plain historical record is simply not the purpose of apocalyptic communication. These prophetic texts are not given so that the original audience might have more factual, scientific knowledge about historical events to come (which is the counterpart to how "scientific" literalists read Genesis). That interpretive approach makes apocalyptic and prophetic texts bland passages of "history in advance," stripping them of

their powerful literary-ethical effect. As one writer says, “apocalyptic was the mother of all Christian theology.”³⁰ We believe the reason is because apocalyptic communication *begins in Genesis*.

If you want to know what happened in Judea and Jerusalem in the events leading up to AD 70 in historical detail and chronological sequence, then you should not go to John’s Apocalypse. In order to get historical information you will need to go to Josephus or other historians of the day whose *intent* was to record the physical history in chronological and precise detail. But that is far from saying that Revelation is myth or non-historical, for it indirectly references many historical events of the first century. If it did not reference historical events in any way, then John’s prophecies *failed*. All the early Jewish Christians understood this fact quite well. That is why they took Jesus and the apostles at their word and left Jerusalem before the Roman armies began their onslaught.

We ask you to keep this symbolic-historical pattern of biblical prophecy in mind when we claim that the early chapters of Genesis are prophetic and communicate through apocalyptic style. The creation is obviously a historical event, as is the creation of Adam and Eve. They are real, historical humans (as physical as Jesus Christ) who were created innocent. They sinned *in history* and broke the covenant relationship between God and man. For this reason God’s redemption was accomplished *in history*. Genesis and Revelation match!

The historicity of Genesis can be demonstrated from the internal evidence as well. The early chapters of Genesis bear obvious historical indicators to culture, technology, and civilization in ancient Mesopotamia. There are many historical events referenced in the early chapters of Genesis (such as a great flood). They demonstrate the historicity of the book and the people and places it references.³¹

While historicity is perfectly compatible with apocalyptic literature, it is equally clear that a plain, historical record of precisely how and when all these events referenced in Genesis happened is simply not the purpose of that form of literature. The purpose of the early chapters of creation, like the record of the fall and redemption, is related to the moral world of mankind and his covenant relationship to God. The super-theme of the Christian faith is this: one is either “in Adam” or “in Christ.” That explains why the story of the Bible unfolds with a theme of division: Cain or Seth, Lamech or Enoch, Ham or Shem/Japheth, Lot or Abraham, Hagar or Sarah, Ishmael or Isaac, Esau or Jacob, and on to Pharaoh or Moses. Everything recorded in the early chapters of Genesis is subordinate to this covenant purpose.

There are two key questions which summarize the covenant view of creation: (1) Does early Genesis reference historical events? Absolutely. (2) Are these early chapters historical narrative? No, they come to us in apocalyptic.

Must Apocalyptic Define All of Genesis?

A related objection to the covenant view of creation will no doubt be “how far will this go?” The fear will be, regardless of the compelling textual evidence of the prophetic nature of the early chapters of Genesis, that the entire book of Genesis will be reduced to allegory or non-historical myth that severs the first book of our Bible from objective reality.

We have no doubt that the overwhelming majority of Genesis is much closer to what is called historical narrative today. Scholars have written extensively about a noticeable change of some sort between Genesis 11 and 12. It is possible that this transition is the result of the switch from apocalyptic style to a form of historical narrative relating to the life of Abraham. It is also possible that the differences between the first eleven chapters of Genesis and the rest of the book result from a change in writing technology. Cuneiform writing is the earliest known form of writing and the introduction of semi-phonetic alphabetic writing does date to a period not long before the time of Abraham. Regardless of how we view the obvious shift from Genesis 11 and 12, the key to sorting out genre questions are the textual indicators.

The idea that apocalyptic must exist uniformly in biblical books or not at all does not fit with the rest of Scripture. Apocalyptic sections appear within historical books all through our Bible. Milton Terry explains:

The dogmatic assertion, sometimes made, that if one part is historical all is historical, and if one part is unhistorical all is unhistorical, cannot possibly determine a matter of this kind. Who would allow such a principle of judgment to control him in his study of the Book of Ezekiel or one of the historical dramas of Shakespeare?³²

Terry could have used many more biblical examples beyond Ezekiel. The Bible has plenty of examples of narrative prose punctuated by apocalyptic segments and vice versa. Revelation is apocalyptic in nature, yet within the book are seven historical letters to seven historical churches. 2 Peter is dedicated to didactic teaching, yet within chapter 3 we find a

classic apocalyptic section. Matthew 24 presents apocalyptic imagery within the gospel genre. It is not difficult, if we pay attention to the textual indicators, to tell what is what in all these examples. Neither is it difficult to affirm that Genesis opens with a prophetic creation account and continues with a direct narrative relating the history of God's covenant people from Abraham on. The biblical authors were not straight-jacketed by such limitations of absolute uniformity as we tend to place on the text from our Western mindset.

Now that we have offered an explanation and brief defense of our apocalyptic view of the literary form of creation, we will provide a demonstration from the early chapters of Genesis.

CHAPTER 15

THE PROPHETIC CREATION

In the last chapter we noted the general elements that mark prophetic texts: symbolism, poetic imagery, exaggeration, hyperbole, and metaphor. There is no doubt that biblical prophecy begins in the early chapters of Genesis. One obvious example is Genesis 3:15 which is a symbolic prophecy of the Messiah – born of a woman who would crush the serpent's head. This prophecy came to ultimate fulfillment through the crucifixion of Christ. The fact that we find prophecy at the beginning of the Bible is the first hint that Genesis may open in the same symbolic apocalyptic style of communication common to prophetic texts. If this is true, then *creation should be read according to that literary style*. Could it be that everything in these first chapters of Genesis communicates in the same symbolic apocalyptic style common to the prophets and the book of Revelation?



More Apocalyptic Literary Features

The key to recognizing apocalyptic in the early chapters of Genesis is to know the distinguishing characteristics of that form of literature. One of the most common features of apocalyptic is the double pattern. Terry explains:

The double picture... accords with the habit of duplicate symbolism so common in apocalyptic revelations.¹

This double pattern is displayed prominently in Revelation. The entire book is divided at the center making two symmetrical halves. The first portion, Revelation 1-11, follows the bridegroom motif and the second portion, Revelation 12-22 follows the bride motif. David Chilton explains:

Overlaying the whole book is the theme of the Bridegroom and the Bride, and the prophecy is divided right down the middle between these two motifs. Thus:

I. The Bridegroom, Chapters 1-11: This section begins (1:9-20) and ends (10:1-7) with visions of the Son of Man, clothed in glory.

II. The Bride, Chapters 12-22: This section begins (12:1-2) and ends (21:9-27) with visions of the Church, clothed in glory.²

Notice how the structure of Revelation follows *the order of creation* in Genesis 2: man first, then woman. This arrangement accounts for the double pattern of the seven trumpets and seven bowl judgments in Revelation. The book repeats itself because of the double pattern common to apocalyptic portions of Scripture.

A related feature of apocalyptic literature is the method of repetition and recapitulation. Milton Terry explains this common feature:

The habit of repeating the same matter under different symbols, and so of presenting it from different points of view, is a very noticeable formality of biblical apocalypics...³

Recapitulation is repetition, but it is more than simply repeating a matter (which is also common in poetic parallelism). Recapitulation takes a theme or subject already introduced and expands on the important or leading feature. Recapitulation zooms in for a closer look.

The Apocalyptic Creation

Both the double pattern and the feature of repetition and recapitulation are prominent in Genesis. The double pattern is manifested in the two accounts of creation, Genesis 1:1-2:4 and Genesis 2:5-25. Repetition and recapitulation is prominent in Genesis 1. The full creation is stated abruptly at the beginning:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
(Gen. 1:1 NKJV)

Then, beginning in verse 3, the author recapitulates creation by providing an expanded picture. The creation week is an apocalyptic recapitulation of the original creation event recorded in Genesis 1:1.

Many writers point out the double pattern also evident in the six days of creation. The creation of light on Day 1 corresponds to the creation of the sun, moon, and stars on Day 4. The creation of the sky and waters on Day 2 corresponds to the creation of birds and fish of Day 5. The creation of the land on Day 3 corresponds to the creation of animals and man on Day 6. We present this double pattern in the graph below:⁴

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Light (verses 2–5) | 4. Luminaries (14–19) |
| 2. Heaven (6–8) | 5. Creatures of Heaven and Water (20–23) |
| 3. Land and Plants (9–13) | 6. Land Creatures and Man (24–31) |
| 7. Rest (2: 1–3) | |

Judging from the parallels, the ordering of the six days of creation is not sequential or linear: it is apocalyptic. There is an internal repetition and recapitulation in each set of days. This structure of the days of Genesis is prophetic. It unveils the nature of God and his divine activity to the reader. The lesson is not scientific in any sense. The text uses images in the physical world to teach about God's covenant works. The creation account is given in this apocalyptic form to teach the contemplative reader a very important theme at the beginning of the Bible. Genesis 1 speaks prophetically about God's creative acts which set the pattern of forming and filling. That which God creates, he recreates. That which God forms, he fills. The symbolism points toward what is to come. Old covenant. New covenant.

There is a sense in which all covenant history is prophetically bound up in the creation week. God's creation on Days 1 through 3 foreshadows the old covenant which came with glory (forming), and Days 4 through 6 foreshadows the new covenant which comes with surpassing glory (filling). The forming and filling theme of all covenant history is first revealed by the prophetic creation.

Paul drew a similar connection to the flow of covenant history with an allusion to evening and morning, first introduced in Day 1. Paul proclaimed:

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. (Rom. 13:11-12 NKJV)

Consider the historical context in which Paul wrote Romans. They were closer to the fulfillment of prophecy at AD 70 than when they first believed. Paul referenced the old covenant which is figuratively night and the coming new covenant which is figuratively the dawning of the new day. (This is a repeated theme in the New Testament. See also 2 Cor. 4:4, 6; Col. 1:12-13; Heb. 10:23-25; 2 Pet. 1:19.) The end of night, which Paul saw as very near, is also a key element in Revelation. In the last chapter John says, “There will be no more night” (Rev. 22:5 NIV).

Chilton captures the *prophetic* significance communicated via apocalyptic style in Genesis 1:

Relatively speaking, the whole history of the world from Adam’s Fall to Christ’s Ascension was Night; relatively speaking, the whole future of the world is bright Day. This follows the pattern laid down at the creation, in which the heavens and earth move eschatologically from evening to morning, the lesser light being succeeded by the greater light, going from glory to Glory.⁵

Daniel’s New Day for a New Creation

In a previous chapter we mentioned a connection between the phrase “evening and morning” of Genesis 1 and another important *prophetic* text. Daniel alludes to the original creation week in his prophecy about the end:

And the vision of the *evening and the morning* which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days. (Dan. 8:26 KJV)

Some translations render “evening and morning” as plural, but it is singular in the Hebrew, just as it is in Genesis 1. No one would miss the connection Daniel makes to the original creation week in Genesis 1. But why would Daniel draw his reader’s attention back to the creation account in speaking about the end? The answer is rooted in Daniel’s historical context. Daniel lived shortly after Isaiah the prophet who spoke of a coming new heavens and new earth. Daniel was aware of what Isaiah prophesied a few years earlier:

Behold, *I will create new heavens and a new earth*. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create,

for I will *create* Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. (Is. 65:17-18 NIV)

Isaiah spoke of the same new heaven and new earth of Revelation 21-22, which is synonymous with the New Jerusalem and the new covenant, where righteousness dwells. Daniel makes the connection to Genesis 1 because his “vision of the evening and morning” is a vision of the time of the *new creation* – a new day for the Israel of God. This is a *new creation*, hence “evening and morning.” That explains why Daniel would label his vision of the time of the new covenant by use of the phrase “evening and morning.” Daniel reached all the way back in the original creation week in Genesis 1 in order to reference the time of the new covenant, a new creation.

Notice also that Daniel was told to seal his vision because it would be a long time before it came to pass. This is in direct contrast to the time statements such as “this generation” (Matt. 24:34), “at hand” (James 5:8), “near” (Rev. 1:3), and “do not seal up” (Rev. 22:10) which we find in the New Testament. The time was *not* near for the fulfillment of this prophecy when Daniel lived, approximately 500 years before Christ. The early Church was near the time of its fulfillment. Daniel’s “vision of the evening and morning” refers to the entire work of Christ over the space of one generation. The fact that Daniel’s “vision of the evening and morning” cannot refer to one 24-hour day, as well as the fact that Daniel references the phrase “evening and morning” in his prophetic book, has implications for how we read “evening and morning” language in Genesis 1.

Daniel’s “vision of the evening and morning,” Daniel’s “new creation day,” may also relate to the biblical “Day of the Lord.” David Chilton explains.

The Biblical imagery for the Day of the Lord, the Day of Judgment, begins (as we should naturally assume) in Genesis. Right at the beginning of the creation account we are told that God created light and named it *Day*... From the start, therefore, we are taught to associate *Day* and *Light* with God.⁶

The creation account is the biblical foundation for all prophetic texts which reference the “Day of the Lord.” This provides more evidence that the creation account is *apocalyptic* from the very beginning. The “evening and morning” of Day 1 in Genesis *is no more to*

be taken as a 24-hour day than is the “Day of the Lord” of which all the prophets spoke.

Six Days of the New Creation

There is another way in which the days of Genesis 1 play a significant role in coming covenant history. John opened his gospel with an echo of Genesis 1:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. (John 1:1-5 NKJV)

Many commentaries note the similarity between John 1:1 and Genesis 1:1. Few trace out the depth of what John does with the creation week in the opening of his gospel. John goes on to outline *six days of Jesus’ ministry*. On the sixth day, Jesus arrives at the wedding feast of Cana – matching the day when God made man “male and female.” To understand the profound significance, let us count the days which lead up to the wedding of Cana.

John 1:1-28 represents Day 1. John opened with the provocative phrase “In the beginning” and speaks of light and darkness (v. 5) and the true light (v. 7) as does Genesis 1. John 1:29f represents Day 2 by saying, “The next day...” – a day which records a *water* baptism. John 1:35f represents Day 3 by saying, “Again, the next day...” – a day when the *Lamb* of God gave an “earthly” name to Peter the *rock*. John 1:43f represents Day 4 by saying, “The following day...” – a day when Jesus is called the *King* of Israel and spoke of *heaven*. John 2:1 skips Day 5 and takes us to Day 6 with, “On the third day...” – the wedding feast celebration at Cana parallels the wedding of Adam and Eve on Day 6 in Genesis 1. John’s gospel opens with a creation week in the ministry of Jesus.⁷

What was John’s point by making this subtle, yet powerful statement? John’s parallel of the creation week in the ministry of Christ was extremely brave. His readers would instantly recognize the connection to Genesis 1. His opening statement was a blatant claim that Jesus Christ is God. John associated Jesus, the eternal Word, with God the Creator. The opening of his gospel asserted that the Sovereign Lord of

all creation had begun his long-promised work on a *new creation* in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of a coming new heaven and new earth. God, in Christ Jesus, began making a new heavens and a new earth when Jesus arrived on the scene for his public ministry.

The connection between Genesis 1 and John 1:1-2:1 is not a literal connection. John referenced 24-hour days in his gospel genre, but no one suggests that Jesus' work (and the new heaven and the new earth) was complete in one literal week of 24-hour days. The new covenant was not fully manifested in its completion until many years later, in AD 70. In other words, this week is *symbolic of a much longer period of time*: the 40 years between the ministry and coming of Christ.

The ramifications for the Genesis debate are huge. Since this week of the new creation is symbolic of the entire work of redemption which Jesus accomplished over many years, we have a remarkable lesson about God's pattern of creation. God creates over time. Like the creation week in the ministry of Jesus, the original creation week is *symbolic of a much longer period of time of God's original creation*. This shows once again that the original days of creation were *never* intended to be understood as ordinary days. They are prophetic. Jesus fulfills them as he does *all* biblical prophecy.

The Days of Revelation

What many do not realize about the book of Revelation is that it contains a de-creation week related to original creation. David Snoke puts it this way:

The use of the number seven to indicate completion or perfection also appears strongly in the book of Revelation. The symbolism of the seven days of creation has a close analogy with the seven seals introduced in Revelation 5-6, along with the seven trumpets of Revelation 8-9 and the seven plagues of Revelation 16. These sequences of seven describe... a sort of "anti-creation week." Revelation shows a process of de-creation over time.⁸

David Chilton made a similar point by writing:

God's judgments (and the revelation of His presence as Judge over a sinful world) are spoken of in terms of de-creation, the collapse of the universe – God ripping apart and dissolving the fabric of creation.⁹

The similarities between the creation week in Genesis and de-creation week in Revelation demonstrate the *genre link* between early Genesis and Revelation. What lends more strength to this view is that the “decreation week” in Revelation *mirrors* the original creation order. Notice the clear association Terry makes between the days in Genesis 1 and the trumpets in Revelation:

The seven days of the cosmogony are no more to be interpreted literally than are the seven trumpets of the Apocalypse. Indeed, the repetitions of “God said” in Genesis suggest some analogies to be found in the sounding of the seven trumpets. At the sounding of the first trumpet the earth was smitten; at the second, the sea; at the third, the rivers and fountains; at the fourth, the sun; at the fifth, the abyss; at the sixth, the armies of Euphrates were set loose, and, at the seventh, “great voices in heaven” announced the advent and reign of the Lord and his Anointed. The days of Genesis are as symbolical as the trumpets of the Apocalypse, and can no more successfully be identified (or shown to correspond) with ascertained aeons of geology... than can the trumpets with successive historical events.¹⁰

What Terry is saying is that the days in Genesis and the trumpets in Revelation communicate through apocalyptic style. Terry is not alone in his analogy. Other theologians recognize the connection between the days of Genesis 1 and Revelation. Author Lee Irons writes in response to the idea that numbered days must mean literal, chronological sequence of 24-hour days:

The fact that the days are numbered need not be taken as evidence of chronological sequence any more than the numbering of the seven seals, trumpets, and bowls in Revelation. The days are numbered to call the reader’s attention to the theological significance of the sabbatical structure of the creation account.¹¹

Augustine viewed the ordering of the days of Genesis 1 in much the same way. To him, these were “God-divided” days not ordinary, 24-hour days. The direct symmetry between Genesis 1 and the “de-creation week” we find in Revelation indicate a literary link.

This has tremendous implications for a biblical understanding of creation. Snoke highlights what this connection *means*:

Both Genesis and Revelation use seven periods to indicate a *long process*, and the number seven indicates *completion*... Given the close analogy of the creation week and its Sabbath with the de-creation sequences in Revelation, it is therefore reasonable to expect that if the events of Revelation take longer than 168 hours, then so might the events of Genesis 1-2.¹²

No one suggests the de-creation week in Revelation involved a week of 24-hour time periods. Neither did the creation week in Genesis 1. God both creates and de-creates over time.

The Prophetic Sun

Genesis 1 contains another subtle prophecy that those who read it as a scientific statement will never see. Biblical prophets use the sun as a symbolic metaphor for the coming of the Messiah. A representative example comes from the last book of the Old Testament:

But for you who reverence my name, the *sun of righteousness* will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. (Mal. 4:2 NIV)

Malachi spoke directly about the coming of Jesus. Many other texts make a similar association between the sun and coming Messiah (e.g., Psalm 19:5-6; Is. 60:1-3).

The New Testament story opens with an explicit example which follows this prophetic theme. Consider Zechariah's prophecy at the birth of John the Baptist:

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which *the rising sun will come to us from heaven* to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace. (Luke 1:76-79 NIV)

To these examples we could add the subtle allusion we already pointed out above in John's creation week. It is no coincidence that Jesus is called "the King of Israel" during John's Day 4 (John 1:49).

If we follow this symbolism back to the creation account, we will find great significance in the *prophetic* order we find in Genesis 1. Why is the sun not created until Day 4? The fact that light exists before the sun is troublesome for those who expect a scientific description and chronological sequence in the creation week. Both the young-earth creationist/24-hour view and old-earth/day-age view have serious trouble with the *order* of creation. God made light on Day 1, but did not create the sun, moon, and stars until Day 4. Even vegetation and trees made on Day 3 *predate* the sun! This is strange if the account is a chronological, scientific record of sequential historical events.

The prophetic creation explains this order in the creation account. *The sun is created in the middle of the creation week because it is prophetic of the Messiah who appears as the center of history.* Genesis 1 prophesied of Jesus Christ. And this prophecy has come true, for all history in Western civilization is divided in the middle by the coming of Christ. As author Elton Trueblood points out:

To date all documents from Julius Caesar would be ridiculous, because that would overglorify the patently local, but about Christ there is an obvious universality. We can be grateful for the rationality of *Anno Domini*. All our dating, whether B.C. or A.D., is a tacit acknowledgment that a significant fact about any other event in history is whether it happened before or after His coming.¹³

The fact that the coming of Jesus lies at the center of history is told in the *prophetic* creation order.¹⁴ Not only is Jesus Christ at the center of history, he is at the center of all Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. He made this claim during his ministry:

You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. *These are the Scriptures that testify about me*, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. (John 5:39-40 NIV)

Jesus was talking about the Old Testament – about *Genesis*. The prophetic sun shows once again that the creation account is focused on covenant relationship, not science. It is about Christ. Those who turn the account into a scientific statement will never understand what Genesis 1 communicates *in prophecy*.

Light Without the Sun

There are more connections between Genesis 1 and the final chapters of Revelation that demonstrate a literary link. The creation account records an ideal picture of light existing before the sun during Day 1 through 3, the first half of the six days of creation. Just as the creation account symbolically represents a time of light without the existence of the sun, so does Revelation 21. Regarding the New Jerusalem, John wrote:

I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. *The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.* The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. (Rev. 21:22-24 NIV)

It is as if the end of Revelation, with John's description of light without the sun, takes us back to the beginning of creation. This fulfills Isaiah's prophecy:

The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. (Is. 60:19 NIV)

The first thing John reveals in Revelation 21:22-24 seems paradoxical. There is no temple in the city because God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. What does John mean? His statement matches the New Testament teaching that Jesus is both the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6) and capstone (Matt. 24:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:7); both are *symbolic* images drawn from temple architecture. The cornerstone is the first stone laid in the construction of the temple, and the capstone is the last. Believers are living stones joined together with Christ (1 Pet. 2:5) to form the holy dwelling place of God (2 Cor. 6:16). That is the temple John saw in his vision.

The next idea presented in Revelation 21:22-24 relates to the creation account. Notice that the light of the sun and moon is obsolete for those who live in the heavenly city which comes down out heaven. The Lord Jesus Christ (the sun of righteousness) gives them light – the Lamb is its lamp. Everything in John's vision relates to covenant realities and redemption, ultimately Jesus Christ. Preterists often point out

that New Testament prophecy is centered wholly upon Jesus Christ, redemptive realities, and covenant relationship with God. Likewise, would it not make sense to consider the same focus for the opening chapters of Genesis?

Many readers approach Revelation 21 looking for a scientific description of a city to come in the future. The scientific/literal approach to Genesis creation comes full circle when futurists jump to wild conclusions about a new city that exists in a new universe (after the demise of our current universe) where there is light without any sun or moon. This is the common futurist view of the New Jerusalem. It is a result of the same scientific approach to Revelation as scientific creationism (whether young or old earth) applies to Genesis. Here is an example incorporated into the popular *A Beka* educational curriculum (written by dispensational premillennialists):

New Jerusalem... is an enormously large city... According to its measurements, the city would cover the land surface from Jacksonville, Florida, west to Dallas, Texas, and from Jacksonville, Florida, north to upper New York state... New Jerusalem is also 1,000 miles high. Commercial planes today fly at altitudes lower than 10 miles. In that city, 100 planes could fly above each other with 10 miles of air space between each of them. Earth has nothing to compare with the enormous size or beauty of that magnificent city.¹⁵

Old-earth creationist author Hugh Ross writes:

The book of Revelation goes so far as to predict the eventual replacement of the entire universe and all its physical laws and space-time structures. The apostle John's description of the new heavens and earth requires the operation of new physical laws—distinct from gravity, thermodynamics, and electromagnetism—and a different dimensional matrix.¹⁶

The reason so many miss John's point is because they do not see that John's description comes to us in highly symbolic apocalyptic form. John was not talking about auto-luminescent space cities. He was saying nothing that he had not already said:

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, *and the earth [ge] was illuminated by his splendor.* (Rev. 18:1 NIV)

John was talking about Jesus who is the “true light that gives light to every man” (John 1:9 NIV). John was talking about Jesus who claimed “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12 NIV). The passage in Revelation takes these truths and packs them in rich apocalyptic symbolism. Those who approach the Bible on scientific/literal terms will remain blind to the central subject John has in mind, namely Jesus Christ. After all, the book is *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*.

What city was John talking about in Revelation 21? He was talking about the same thing to which Jesus alluded in his Sermon on the Mount:

You are the light of the world. *A city on a hill cannot be hidden*. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, *let your light shine before men*, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matt. 5:14-16 NIV)

John’s holy city is the city made up of God’s redeemed people. Jesus lives in them and the light that shines out to the world is the light of the gospel. The holy city is the community of God’s saints. What is more, the writer of Hebrews, toward the end of New Testament times, stated that believers *had arrived* at the New Jerusalem:

But you *have come* to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. (Heb. 12:22 NIV)

There is simply nothing *future* about the New Jerusalem by the end of the New Testament period. The new covenant creation Jesus began in his ministry was nearing completion by the time Hebrews was written. The holy city came down out of heaven to earth *progressively*. Again, God creates over time.

There is much more in Revelation 21:22-24 to highlight a connection back in Genesis 1. The image of a city that no longer needs the sun and moon to shine is, among other things, a symbolic reference to the end of the typological worship ordered by the days and seasons of the Mosaic code. Genesis is clear that the sun and the moon were given *to mark times and seasons* (Gen. 1:14) which the Hebrews would naturally associate with their seasonal system of worship. Bernard Ramm, an old-earth creationist author, suggested this interpretation decades ago:

The sun and moon were to function for man for *seasons*. By an analysis of the usage of the word *seasons* Mauser indicates that it means religious seasons, not the four seasons of the year. The position of the sun indicated the various times for daily sacrifices, and the position of the moon for monthly sacrifices. Seven was very important in the whole Jewish economy and it figured in their astronomy and religious seasons.¹⁷

Those who enter into the new covenant salvation that Christ returned to give to his people are in direct covenant relationship to God through Christ. No longer is God's relationship mediated by the shadows of the Mosaic economy with its typological ordinances of seasonal worship patterns. These shadows completely passed away in AD 70.

The light which goes out from the city on a hill (New Jerusalem) is symbolic of Christ and his gospel which *restores* the covenant relationship between God and man.* The nations flowed into that city as the gospel went to the Gentiles. They still do as the gospel redeems men and societies from the curse upon Adam. The New Jerusalem is God's universal church, made up of all who are born of the Spirit from above.

Regardless of the details of any particular reading, it is obvious that light apart from the sun, moon, and stars is a detail common to both the Genesis creation account and Revelation. Both communicate through a common apocalyptic literary form which is fundamentally *symbolic*.

Genesis 2 Recapitulates Genesis 1

The apocalyptic form of repetition and recapitulation does not exist merely within the confines of Genesis 1. The creation account which begins in Genesis 2 is a recapitulation of Genesis 1. Here the prophetic creation zooms in on the creation of man. This enlarges on the primary covenantal theme of the human-divine relationship. Man is highlighted as the apex of creation by this order of apocalyptic repetition. Terry summarizes the significance:

It accords with the habit of biblical apocalypics to enhance the leading features of an ideal picture by artificial repetition, and so our author deemed it important to take up again that part of the work of the sixth day which re-

* We explore the significance of this fact for a proper view of God's original garden in Chapter 20.

ferred to man, and show more fully how “he created them male and female.”¹⁸

The prophetic creation explains why the order presented in Genesis 1 is flipped in Genesis 2. In Chapter 13 we pointed out how Genesis 1 places the creation of man *after* the creation of everything else. Man, both male and female, is made last on Day 6. Notice that Genesis 2 reverses the order in typical apocalyptic style. God first creates Adam (Gen. 2:6-7), then the garden (Gen. 2:8-17), then the animals and birds (Gen. 2:18-20) and finally Eve (Gen. 2:21-25).

Speaking scientifically, this order in Genesis 2 contradicts the order in Genesis 1. Either God made animals first (Gen. 1), or he made man first (Gen. 2): it cannot be both. If Genesis 1 is historical narrative, then Genesis 2 cannot be (or vice versa). Yet even the Hebrew structure is similar in both accounts:

A widely accepted example of the *waw*-consecutive in a recapitulatory sense is found in the near context, where the creation of the living creatures out of the dust of the ground is narrated *after* man is already on the scene. If the *waw*-consecutive in Genesis 2:19 (“And out of ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field...”) denotes chronological sequence, we have an apparent discrepancy with Genesis 1:24-28, which places the creation of the living creatures before that of man.¹⁹

Those who demand historical narrative for both accounts imply the Bible contradicts itself.

The truth is that neither account is plain historical narrative. Apocalyptic is known for repeating the same ideal picture in a different order to highlight a different point of view for the reader. This is precisely what takes place in Genesis 1 and 2, for the creation is *prophetic*. Just as Adam was made first and then Eve, Christ’s resurrection came first followed by the resurrection of the Bride.* Of course, we know that all of this did not happen within one 24-hour day in the new covenant creation, so there is no biblical reason to believe Genesis 2 references the events of one 24-hour day. This is one more example of how the creation account is prophetic.

* We will discuss the issue of the resurrection more fully in Chapter 20.

Genesis 2 introduces a host of details which clearly resemble Revelation. The garden with its rivers and the tree of life in the middle correlates to Revelation 22, which presented the symbolic picture of a river flowing down the center of the city with the tree of life on each side bearing its fruit every month (Rev. 22:2).

Genesis 2 introduced precious metals (gold) and gems (onyx) just as the New Jerusalem has a street of pure gold and foundations, walls, and gates with many precious gems (Rev. 21:18-21). These common elements and images demonstrate the common literary style of both. Indeed, it appears very obvious that Revelation 21-22 is the *culmination* of the symbolic picture of pre-fall Adam and Eve, content with their blessed life in friendship and communion with God. Milton Terry makes this point plain:

Thus the New Testament vision of the new heavens, new earth, and new Jerusalem is but a fuller apocalypse of what was foreshadowed by this ancient revelation... [T]he holy city out of heaven is, like the Edenic garden, to be a holy of holies, into which all who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. vii, 14) shall enter. Then, in highest reality, God's tabernacle shall be with men, and he will dwell with them, and wipe away every tear, and death shall be no more... *From them the curse of sin has been removed* [emphasis ours].²⁰

Terry's mention of the symbolic washing of clothing in Revelation is another significant link. John's reference to the white robes of the saints washed in the blood of the lamb *symbolizes* the purity of salvation. Likewise, Genesis 2 ends with the mention of the nakedness of Adam and Eve, yet there is no shame, *symbolizing* their original innocence and immaturity (the image is like newborn babies who are naked and sense no shame). Genesis 2 is filled with symbolism related to covenant relationship. This follows the priority of covenant creation which sees a fundamental *theological* orientation in the creation account. Scientific readings miss all this, just as they miss the redemptive meaning of the last two chapters of Revelation. Those who start with scientific literalism in Genesis will consistently end with scientific literalism and misunderstand Revelation.

The Bride from the Side of Adam

Christians miss a lot more in Genesis 2 when they insist the account is plain historical narrative. As we already pointed out above, the structure of Revelation is designed to reflect the created order of Genesis 2: man first, then woman. This should not surprise us because Jesus presented himself as the “bridegroom” during his ministry (Matt. 9:15; 25:1-13; John 3:27-30). The imagery of Jesus Christ as the bridegroom and the Church as the bride (Eph. 5:26-27; Rev. 19:7) is a prominent teaching in the New Testament.

Paul applied this imagery of Christ, the man, and his Church, the woman, to practical Christian life:

Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but *I am talking about Christ and the church*. (Eph. 5:24-32 NIV)

Paul took his readers back to Genesis 2:24 with his citation and applied it to Jesus Christ and the Church. Why would Genesis 2 have any relationship to Jesus Christ and the Church? Paul sees much more in Genesis 2 than mere history. Does it not appear that Paul saw the creation of Adam and Eve as *prophetic*? Could it be that Genesis 2 is prophetic?

Consider the context from which Paul drew his citation:

So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be

called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." (Gen. 2:21-23 NIV)

The key in this passage is that Eve, the bride, was formed from the side of Adam. "Woman" means "taken out of man." Another point not to miss is that this forming took place while Adam was in "a deep sleep." These same elements surface again in John's account of the crucifixion:

But when they came to Jesus and found that he was *already dead*, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers *pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water*. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. (John 19:33-35 NIV)

This detail of the crucifixion is unique to John's gospel. He was the only one of the twelve to remain with Jesus during the crucifixion. The others ran away. It is obvious from the text that John knew that what he saw when the soldier pierced the side of Christ was extremely important. He went on to mention how these events fulfilled the details of the Law (Ex. 12:46) and prophets (Psalm 34:20; Zech. 12:10). John confirmed that what he saw with his eyes was true. But what did John see? He saw the last Adam's side pierced causing a sudden flow of blood and water. When did this happen? It happened during the last Adam's "deep sleep." This is the blood and the water through which Christ's bride, the Church, was made. *The bride of Christ, the new Eve, was made from the side of Christ, the last Adam.*

The New Testament teaches constantly that the Church is formed through blood and water. Believers have been justified "by his blood" (Rom. 5:9), have "redemption through his blood" (Eph. 1:7), and for "sprinkling by his blood" (1 Peter 1:2). In his teaching about Christ and the Church Paul says, "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her *by the washing with water* through the word" (Eph. 5:25-26 NIV). John, the one who saw the pierced side of Christ in person, brought the elements of blood and water together when he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have *washed* their robes and made them white in the *blood* of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14).

The many New Testament references to Jesus Christ, the bridegroom, and to the Church, the bride, are all rooted in the prophetic

nature of Genesis 2. Many recognize how Genesis 3:15 speaks prophetically about the redemptive work of the coming Messiah, but Genesis 2:21-24 is also prophetic. It foreshadows the coming sacrificial death, burial and resurrection of the last Adam and the creation of the new Eve from his own side. Husband and wife now live together, for believers are joined with the body of Christ. The two have become one, for God dwells in the hearts of his people! But why did Paul reference Genesis 2 when he spoke of the union and communion of Christ and the Church? He went to Genesis 2 because it offers a prophetic, *apocalyptic* presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Apocalyptic Fall of Man

The elements which betray apocalyptic continue in Genesis 3. There we find the account of the woman's encounter with the serpent. That element is echoed in Revelation 12 where we also find an encounter between a woman and a serpent. Both accounts reference real events which happened in history, yet neither provide a historical narrative in scientific detail. They are both apocalyptic presentations.

Note the strong parallels. In Genesis the woman succumbs to temptation and the pain of childbirth is increased.²¹ In Revelation 12 we find another woman who cries out in the pain of childbirth and encounters the serpent. This outcome ends very differently, however. While the serpent was successful in the garden, he is unsuccessful in Revelation 12; the woman flees instead of heeding the serpent.

The connection between Genesis and Revelation becomes more obvious when it is noted that the order of temptation is *reversed* in the New Testament from the account of the fall. Jesus (the last Adam and Bridegroom), like a real man, resists temptation first in the *wilderness* for forty days (Luke 4:1-13). Only after the last Adam succeeds does the woman (the Bride) resist the serpent (Rev. 12) during the forty years between the ascension and coming of Christ. Jesus resisted temptation first, then the Bride resisted the dragon or serpent. This is the opposite order we see from the failure of Adam and Eve in the garden where Eve sinned first, then Adam.

The curse God pronounced on the serpent, Eve, and Adam in Genesis 3:14-19 is apocalyptic because it follows the common four-fold pattern of apocalyptic texts. Each statement of God's curse contains a four-fold structure. Terry again draws the *literary* connection:

So in other analogous scriptures it will be seen that apocalyptic judgments move in four-fold strokes, or phases. Witness the four plagues of locusts in Joel (i, 4), the four horns, the four smiths, and four chariots of Zechariah's vision (Zech. i, 18, 20; vi, 1).²²

This is more internal evidence that the early chapters of Genesis come to us in apocalyptic form that was never intended to be read in scientific literal terms.

Genesis 3 closes with mention of the cherubim which guard the way to the tree of life with a flaming sword. These are important details because the cherubim generally appear in poetic and apocalyptic texts (with the sole exception of the typological furniture in the Mosaic tabernacle) The presence of cherubim in the story is an *apocalyptic* indicator. The cherubim are described in Ezekiel's apocalyptic vision (Ez. 1). They also appear in Revelation as creatures which surround God's Throne (Rev. 4). The similarity highlights the common literary form of these texts. The image of a flaming sword is not a scientific description in any sense, but rather a symbolic picture common to biblical apocalyptic.

The story of the cherubim (plural) who guard the way to the tree of life has its counterpart in the record of resurrection of Jesus. Notice what Mary saw in the tomb:

Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, *one at the head and the other at the foot*. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" (John 20:11-13 NIV)

There is no doubt that the apostle John, who history records came from a priest's family, understood the significance of what Mary saw. The scene in the tomb held a powerful connection to the mercy-seat covering on the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:17-20). The solid gold mercy-seat cover of the ark had one cherub on each end. Could the significance be any plainer? The missing body of Christ is the true mercy-seat, the place where God meets with his people (Ex. 25:21-22). However, the *source* for the two cherubs placed atop the mercy-seat cover of the ark in the tabernacle and temple is the cherubim (plural) back in Genesis who guard the way to the tree of life (Gen. 3:24).

Note the contrast between the original garden and the resurrection which also took place in a garden (John 19:41). In Genesis 3 the cherubim bear a sword that allows access to none. Adam's sin led to the barring of his family from the tree of life. The two angels Mary saw in

the tomb, one on each end of the missing body of Christ, bring the story to completion. These angels wield no weapon. They even ask Mary why she cried, for there is no reason for tears among God's people due to the fact of the resurrection of Christ. What does the image of the two angels on each end of the missing body of Christ say? *It is the missing body of Jesus Christ that is the entry way back into God's garden and the tree of life, eternal life.* God's people are no longer barred from the tree of life because of the Christ's sacrifice. The missing body of Christ opens the way into the Most Holy place (Heb. 10:19-22).²³

Flaming Swords and Heavenly Bows

The appearance of the flaming sword in Genesis 3 takes us to another apocalyptic image we find in the early chapters of Genesis. James Jordan explains the connection:

The warbow, God's weapon, is parallel to the flaming sword of the cherubim (Genesis 3:24), this being the special sign of the Adamic covenant under judgment.²⁴

Terry drew the same connection more than a hundred years ago:

The Edenic apocalypse had for its signs the cherubim and the flaming sword; the Noachic covenant has the significant symbol of the rainbow.²⁵

Just as the flaming sword and the cherubim are indicators of apocalyptic, so is God's bow which we find mentioned first in the flood account.

Lest we be misunderstood, we must emphasize that the story of the flood we find in Genesis is historical at some level (as is the story of Adam and Eve.) What is also true is that the flood is not communicated in scientific detail but according to the same *covenant* priority and symbolic method common in the creation account and other examples of apocalyptic literature. Note the poetic repetition so plain in the account:

Now the flood was on the earth forty days. The waters increased and lifted up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. The waters prevailed and greatly increased on the earth, and the ark moved about on the surface of the waters. And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were cov-

ered. The waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains were covered. (Gen. 7:17-20 NKJV)

The poetic progression of this passage is in keeping with apocalyptic style. How can we be confident that the flood event is communicated apocalyptically? The first key is the presence of God's symbolic bow. As we saw in Chapter 9, the bow of God's wrath appears mainly in apocalyptic texts (the only exception are the Psalms, which are also poetic). God's bow appears, indirectly, in the *prophetic* Song of Moses:

"I will hide my face from them," he said," and see what *their end* will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful... I will heap calamities upon them and *spend my arrows against them*. (Deut. 32:20, 23 NIV)

Lamentations, in prophetic symbolism and style, references God's bow in relation to God's covenant judgment on Israel:

Like an enemy *he has strung his bow*; his right hand is ready. Like a foe he has slain all who were pleasing to the eye; he has poured out his wrath like fire on the tent of the Daughter of Zion. (Lam. 2:4 NIV)

We also find God's bow in Habakkuk in reference to God's past covenant judgments on the enemies of God. The prophet uttered his *apocalyptic* pronouncement:

You uncovered your *bow*, you called for many arrows. Selah. You split the earth with rivers; the mountains saw you and writhed. Torrents of water swept by; the deep roared and lifted its waves on high. Sun and moon stood still in the heavens *at the glint of your flying arrows*, at the lightning of your flashing spear. (Hab. 3:9-11 NIV)

Note again that Habakkuk refers to historical events in the Israel's past. He recounted the Exodus and the Red Sea crossing and conquest of Canaan in poetic, apocalyptic style. We emphasize again that there is *real* history involved in apocalyptic genre. Yet, a precise historical record is not the prophet's intent. Similarly, the author of the flood account referenced real, historical events, but does not offer a *scientific* description of what happened in exact detail. Genesis 6-9 is primarily a poetic description, just like John's reference to God's bow in Revelation:

I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a white horse! *Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.* (Rev. 6:1-2 NIV)

The appearance of the bow in Revelation 6:2 is an indication of the link that runs through prophetic texts between Genesis and Revelation. John presents a symbolic picture of the unleashing of God's curse upon unfaithful Israel. The rider on the white horse with a bow symbolizes Jesus Christ. Historically, John referenced the arrival and manifestation of God's promised judgment when the Roman Armies began to lay waste to Judea. Again, there are historical events referenced in the apocalyptic description but only indirectly. Prophetic literature is symbolic, filled with metaphor. Jesus did not ride a physical white horse or carry a physical bow into Jerusalem in AD 70. The account is apocalyptic. So it is with the flood in Genesis 6-9.

The Apocalyptic Flood

There are other apocalyptic indicators in the flood account. Look closely again at two passages we introduced in Chapter 8:

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and *the windows of heaven were opened.* (Gen. 7:11 NKJV)

Whoever flees at the sound of terror will fall into a pit; whoever climbs out of the pit will be caught in a snare. The *floodgates of the heavens are opened*, the foundations of the earth shake. *The earth is broken up*, the earth is split asunder, the earth is thoroughly shaken. (Is. 24:18-19 NIV)

Isaiah refers to the *covenant* judgment on Judah in 586 BC. But notice the linguistic parallels between his apocalyptic text and Genesis 7. The Septuagint reveals an exact match in Greek between "heaven opened" language in Gen. 7:11 and these passages in Revelation:

After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing *open in heaven.* (Rev. 4:1 NIV)

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. (Rev. 19:11 NIV)

The fact that the flood account comes to us in apocalyptic provides a subtle but powerful argument for a *local* flood. Apocalyptic is known for its *hyperbole* and *universal* point of view. In order to illustrate the issue consider a passage quoted approvingly by Whitcomb and Morris in reference to local-flood advocates:

They have thereby violated all the rules of a sound philology. They have disregarded the spirit of the language, and disregarded the dictates of common sense. It is impossible to read the narrative of our chapter [Genesis 7] without being irresistibly impressed that the *whole* earth was destined for destruction. This is so evident throughout the whole of the description, that it is unnecessary to adduce single instances... In our case *the universality does not lie in the words merely, but in the tenor of the whole narrative.*²⁶

How does this argument hold if the flood is communicated via apocalyptic? Of course, many claim the exact same thing about events referenced in the book of Revelation. The apocalyptic nature of Genesis 6-9 explains further the seemingly universal picture presented, at least as it reads in English. Terry notes God's response to the antediluvian *covenant* world:

His fury is such that he decrees to wipe out man and beast and creeping thing and fowl from off the face of the ground. All this belongs, obviously, to the bold imagery of apocalypics and poetry, not to the literature of prosaic history.²⁷

The seemingly universal statements regarding "mankind" in the flood account match the "mankind" statements we find in Revelation:

A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury. The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their

hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts. (Rev. 9:18-21 NIV)

John speaks from a first century covenant context. He was communicating apocalyptically by presenting a universal picture of events in Judea and Jerusalem during the first century. Likewise, the apocalyptic nature of the flood account implies that all these seemingly universal statements could as easily be a *function of prophetic hyperbole befitting apocalyptic literature*. Few consider this when they read the flood account. Though it is seldom pointed out in debates over the scope of the flood, global flood advocates must *first* prove the account was intended as a scientific description of the historical event *before* they can argue legitimately from the seemingly universal statements of Genesis 6-9. The issue is highlighted for preterists who understand that “mankind” in Revelation 9 applies to a limited *covenant* context.

The Covenant View of Creation

As we come to the end of our introductory demonstration of the covenant view of creation, we freely confess there are many details in Genesis 1-11 upon which we have not touched. This presentation has likely raised many questions that we have not considered, let alone answered. We are confident that much more work needs to be done to flesh out additional implications of this *covenant* view of creation, but we hope the details we have presented thus far will compel you to consider a covenant view of creation.

Covenant eschatology, also known as preterism, calls logically for a symmetrical view of the beginning in Genesis: covenant creation. If biblical prophecy is centered on Jesus Christ and covenant relationship with God, then so, too, is the creation account. We believe the opening chapters of Genesis are primarily a *covenant statement*, not a scientific account of the *origin* of the physical universe, just as the final chapters of Revelation are primarily a *covenant statement*, not a scientific account of the *end* of the physical universe. Covenant creation and covenant eschatology combined (both rooted in the same priority of covenant relationship and friendship with God) offer true consistency and biblical accuracy in understanding the Bible in terms of itself, from the beginning to the end.

It is fitting that we cite Terry again, whose words sum up well our approach to Genesis creation:

The result of our study thus far is the conviction that in these opening chapters of Genesis we are not to look for historic narrative, nor contributions to natural science, but to recognize a symbolic apocalypse of God's relation to the world and to man.²⁸

The Bible is about God and his covenant with his people. It is time to move beyond creation science from Genesis to Revelation.

CHAPTER 16

APOCALYPTIC LIFE-SPANS



Another significant element which betrays the apocalyptic style of the early chapters of Genesis is the record of extremely long life-spans. Young-earth creationists “literalize” these ages as arithmetic statements of historical fact. They often use this *interpretation* to argue for a great post-flood change in planet Earth because human beings do not live to such ages today.

Old-earth creationists who treat Genesis as a scientific record or description of how God created the physical universe have an acute problem in light of these amazing ages we find in the early chapters of Genesis. They believe that the world of Adam and the patriarchs is essentially *the same* world of our experience. Yet that raises a question. Why do humans not live biologically for many hundreds of years today if Adam’s world is “our world”?¹

Covenant Life and Covenant Death

The fact that the early chapters of Genesis are apocalyptic and prophetic is the key which unlocks the meaning of the long life-spans. Apocalyptic genre is known for its use of symbolic numerology as Terry notes:

That certain numbers are symbolically used in the prophetic books is conceded by all interpreters.²

There are a couple of obvious examples in Revelation which utilize symbolic numerology. The 144,000 (Rev. 7:4-8) is a symbolic number (12 x 12 x 1000) related to the 12 tribes of Israel, God’s holy remnant. The millennium (Rev. 20:4) is another symbolic number (10 x 10 x 10) which symbolizes perfection and completeness. If there is a literary connection

between Genesis and Revelation, then we have good reason to believe these long ages are *symbolic* and serve numerological purposes.³ They are not given as a scientific or mathematical record of biological age.

Some young-earth creationists note the presence of numerology in ancient texts. Jordan writes:

Ancient and medieval literature abounds in numerical symbolism, large parallel structures, intricate chiasmic devices, astral allusions, sweeping metaphors, topological parallels, and symbolism in general.⁴

Inexplicably, Jordan does not apply this insight to the life-spans in Genesis (though he accepts Genesis as ancient literature). His statement is compatible with a symbolic interpretation of these amazing life-spans.

Another relevant point to consider is that ancient Mesopotamian documents contemporary with Genesis also include a record of extremely long life-spans of Sumerian *kings*. One author explains:

The Sumerian antediluvian king list includes eight kings who reigned, according to that list, for a total of 241,200 years. That document dates from the third dynasty of Ur or earlier.⁵

Young-earth creationists seldom mention this type of ancient literature from Mesopotamia. But this is important to consider for those who value the cultural context and original audience expectations surrounding biblical texts. The fact these Sumerian lists are related to *kings* may provide an important original cultural context for the apocalyptic life-spans in Genesis.

Perhaps the obstacle to understanding the long life-spans in Genesis is the common assumption that the long life-spans must refer to *biological* life and death. If “the death” Adam and Eve experienced when they sinned was *covenant* death, not biological death, then we have good reason to consider the possibility that these long life-spans make a *covenant* statement rather than a *biological* statement. Why would the writer of Genesis switch from an account dealing with spiritual death in Genesis 3 to an accounting of biological life-spans in the following chapters? Where does this supposed shift in the definition from “the death” to some other kind of death take place?

The Mother of All the Living vs. The Serpent

Once we recognize the prophetic nature of the early chapters of Genesis, we can see everything recorded in these chapters as centered in covenant. Biology is not the point. This is a covenant story. The curse God pronounced after the fall of Adam and Eve is that, from then on, the seed of the serpent would be at war with the seed of the woman:

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. (Gen. 3:15 NIV)

What did Adam do immediately after God's curse in Genesis 3? "Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living" (Gen. 3:20 NIV). To what kind of life does this text refer? *Covenant* life; just as Adam and Eve had just experienced *covenant* death when they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Author Douglas Wilson suggests that the issue in the Bible, from the earliest chapters of Genesis, has always been *covenant* lineage:

Regeneration means becoming the seed of another—ultimately, having one family tree and then acquiring a different one. My father used to be Adam and now he is the last Adam. My father used to be the devil and now he is Abraham... Regeneration means being transformed from the seed of the serpent to the seed of the woman... On all questions regarding regeneration, the basic question is: Who's your daddy? Outside the covenant, the devil is father.⁶

This covenant lineage implies a covenant view of "the life" and "the death" in Genesis 3. This becomes more obvious when we understand the role Eve plays in picturing the Church. In the last chapter we showed how Paul used Adam and Eve as a living symbol of Christ and the Church when he quoted from Genesis 2:24 in Ephesians 5:31. The story of Adam and Eve is a foretaste of the story of Jesus Christ and the Church. Just as Eve was taken from the side of Adam during a deep sleep, so too was the Church formed through the blood and water from the side of Christ that was pierced during his own death or "deep sleep." Just as Eve is the mother of all those who enjoy *covenant* life (Gen. 3:20), so the Church is the mother of all who enjoy life in Christ (Gal. 4:26). The symmetry of the entire New Testament teaching regarding Christ,

the bridegroom, as the last Adam makes sense only if the Church, the bride, is the new Eve.

Two covenant lines manifest themselves very quickly after God's curse in Genesis 3:15. God's curse promised a war between the *covenant* offspring of the woman and the *covenant* offspring of the serpent. This conflict begins with the first two children of Adam and Eve. Cain is the firstborn. Abel is born second. The first made offerings that were not acceptable to God. The second made offerings that were acceptable to God. Is this not *prophetic* of the New Testament situation with the Christians and the Jews? Both offered sacrifices to God. God accepted the offerings of the Christians, but rejected the offerings of the unbelieving Jews (Heb. 11:4).

What happened when it became evident, through the signs and wonders, that God was pleased with the Christians and not the Jews? Cain (the Jews who rejected Christ) rose up to kill his brother, Abel (the Jewish Christians). And there is more to the story. Seth was given "in place of Abel" (Gen. 4:25). *The true seed of the woman undergoes a prophetic death, burial, and resurrection in Genesis 4.*

Jesus speaks in light of these two *covenant* lines originating in Genesis 3 and 4 when he explained the parable of the wheat and the tares:

The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the *sons of the evil one*, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. (Matt. 13:38-39 NIV)

In other words, the weeds are the offspring of the serpent while the wheat is the offspring of the woman. Or consider this conversation between the Pharisees and Jesus:

"Abraham is our father," they answered. "If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. *You are doing the things your own father does.*" "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. *You belong to your father, the devil*, and you want to carry out your

father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning...
(John 8:39-44 NIV)

Jesus took them back to Genesis 3 and told the Pharisees that they were children of the devil. In John's first epistle, he makes a similar *covenant* statement rooted in the first chapters of Genesis:

Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. *He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning.* The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work... This is how we know who the *children of God* are and who the *children of the devil* are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:7-8, 10 NIV)

Just like Jesus his teacher, John took his readers back to Genesis. In fact, John then makes a direct reference to the story of Cain and Abel and applies it to their historical situation:

This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. Do not be like Cain, *who belonged to the evil one* and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. (1 John 3:11-12 NIV)

The context and details of New Testament teaching revolves around the story that begins in the first chapters of Genesis. Life and death, from the very beginning, is defined by covenant relationship and fellowship with the one true God. The Bible is concerned primarily with covenant lineage. "The life" and "the death" originate at the very beginning of the Bible, in the garden of Eden.

The Book of Covenant Life

That big-picture framework sheds light on the issue of the life-spans in the early chapters of Genesis. What evidence do we find in Genesis that these long life-spans are symbolic, in keeping with apocalyptic literature?

We should first point out that the genealogies in Genesis 4 (related to Cain) and Genesis 5 (related to Seth) present another double picture common to apocalyptic form. Cain symbolizes the faithless and wicked

line which lived “shut out” from the Lord’s presence. Seth embodies God’s righteous covenant seed line which ultimately brings the Messiah into the world.

In the case of these parallel genealogies, it seems curious that only one genealogy records long life-spans. The long ages appear *only* within the godly line related to the Messiah (Gen. 5). They do not appear in relationship to Cain’s line (Gen. 4). The same is true of the genealogies which are listed after the flood (Gen. 11). By placing Seth’s genealogy in Genesis 5 together with Shem’s genealogy in Genesis 11, we find that Adam’s line to Abraham through Seth, Noah, and Shem is communicated with long life-spans and no one else. *Only the Messianic line is described with these extremely long ages!* Only God’s covenant line is recorded with these life-spans, for they are the offspring of Eve rather than the serpent.

The reason Cain’s line has no life-spans recorded is because his line is dead. Remember, Cain was driven out from the presence of God (Gen. 4:13-16). This was his death sentence for killing his brother. The result of Cain’s wickedness was that he and his offspring would have no life in them. That is why there are no life-spans listed in the line of Cain.

Young-earth advocates assume that the long life-spans in Genesis were *universal*, meaning they applied to all people living on planet Earth at the time. However, a careful reading shows that Genesis does not say that all people referenced in Genesis lived to these ages – only those within the faithful covenant line. There is a clear *covenant context* in which the long life-spans appear. They are not universal. They apply only to God’s covenant line.

The apocalyptic, symbolic interpretation of the long life-spans relies on three points thus far: (1) ancient literature and apocalyptic is known to contain numerological symbolism, (2) Mesopotamian records contemporary with Genesis used extremely long life-spans in ancient Sumerian king lists, and (3) *only* the covenant line from Adam to Abraham are referenced with such life-spans. These facts combine to make a numerological, symbolic reading of these life-spans reasonable. We might say that the long life-spans are a textual indicator to mark out *covenant life* between man and God during the time of the patriarchs. They showed who enjoyed covenant life and friendship in the presence of God (Seth and the godly line to Abraham), and those who did not see life because they were “shut out” from the presence of God (Cain and the ungodly). Genesis is a book of covenant life.⁷

Symbolic Patterns and Amazing Coincidences

It is also important to recognize the remarkable patterns in the listing of numbers in the genealogy of long life-spans in Genesis 5:

These numbers are not only excessively large but also seem to fall into a discernible pattern... All of the numbers in Genesis 5, along with those for Noah that appear in Genesis 7:11; 9:28-29, are either exact multiples of five, or else multiples of five with the addition of seven (one number, the years of Methuselah's life, was twice augmented by seven).⁸

That is a remarkable coincidence. What are the chances of that happening in any given group of individuals of this size in any historical setting? Realize the pattern must be maintained not only in the total years lived, but the timing of the births as well!

Key individuals are associated with highly significant biblical numbers. Lamech, the father of Noah, lived 777 years (Gen. 5:31). Might this be an obvious case of symbolism?

Noah lived 500 years (a nice round number) and became the father of his three sons (Gen. 5:32). The flood began when Noah was 600 years old (Gen. 7:11). But isn't it interesting that Noah still has only 3 sons and daughters-in-law. Young-earth creationists suggest that these long life-spans in Genesis allowed for each generation to have multitudes of children. Yet Noah has only three sons – just like a normal family with which we are familiar.⁹

The apocalyptic interpretation becomes stronger as we continue to examine key individuals. Genesis emphasizes that Enoch, the seventh from Adam who “walked with God,” lived 365 years (Gen. 5:23-24). Terry notes the symbolic meaning of this life-span by saying:

The number of “all the days of Enoch”... is symbolic of an ideal cycle of perfect human life, a full year of years; and men who attained such perfection of fellowship with *the Elohim* are apocalyptically styled *sons of the Elohim* (comp. Gen vi, 2).¹⁰

This is one additional item that lends support to the conclusion that the long life-spans in Genesis communicate through prophetic numerology and are not intended to be taken as a “literal” statement of biological age.

Long Life-Spans and Isaiah the Prophet

Are there other examples of apocalyptic and prophetic texts which communicate a symbolic long life-span for the faithful? Isaiah the prophet used similar long life-spans in his famous prophecy about the new heavens and new earth. He says this about the New Jerusalem:

Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; *he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth*; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. (Is. 65:20 NIV)

We know that Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in the first century since Isaiah 65 is the prophetic background for John's vision of the new heaven and new earth in Revelation 21-22. Notice that Isaiah's reference to a long life-span is *comparable* to the life-spans in Genesis. Someone dying at a 100 (a nice round number) will be thought of as a "mere youth." Isaiah's 100-year-old juvenile would be the proportional equivalent to many of the long ages recorded in Genesis, ages which stretch 600-900 years in some cases.

Preterists understand that the long life-spans in Isaiah are symbolic. They are not to be taken literally because Isaiah is presenting an *apocalyptic picture* of the new heavens, new earth, and New Jerusalem. The long ages in Isaiah 65 are symbolic. What is remarkable is that some preterists already see the connection between Isaiah 65:20 and the book of Genesis. Author Ed Stevens offers this explanation:

In regard to the life spans mentioned in Is. 65:20, we need to take a look at the way this language is used elsewhere in the Old Testament Hebrew... It would have been thought a curse in the days before the Flood to have lived less than a hundred years. Such an untimely death would have been considered "dying young." It was a blessing to "live long and prosper" and a curse to "die young." *This phraseology was used to indicate the blessed (or cursed) condition of the people under consideration* [emphasis ours].¹¹

Stevens continues to think of the early chapters of Genesis in terms of biological life and death, but he does recognize that *Isaiah 65 is related to Genesis*. We suggest that Isaiah's prophecy of long life-spans *originates* in the early chapters of Genesis. Isaiah 65 draws from the life-

spans recorded in the early chapters of Genesis. Perhaps the patriarchs reached these symbolic long ages because they lived lives which were blessed, not cursed. If this is true, then we have another link between the early chapters of Genesis and later prophetic and apocalyptic texts. *The long life-spans in Genesis should be interpreted in the same manner as the long life-spans in Isaiah.*

The Millennial Life-Span

There is another place in Scripture which records long life-spans, but before we examine that text we should point out that no life-spans in Genesis ever reached 1000 years. Commentators have noted that fact in various ways, but all of the patriarchs “died” before reaching the symbolic 1000-year mark. That is important to keep in mind as we go to another place in the Bible which references an apocalyptic life-span.

Revelation uses a 1000-year period to represent the perfect *fulfillment* of the long life-spans introduced in Genesis. For what many do not consider is that the millennium in Revelation 20 is *a symbolic life-span of the redeemed*. Like Isaiah, John reaches back into Genesis and says:

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And *they lived* and reigned with Christ *for a thousand years*. (Rev. 20:4 NKJV)

Invariably, interpreters put the emphasis of this passage on the reigning aspect of the millennium. Remember that the long life-spans in ancient Sumerian culture, contemporary to the early chapters of Genesis, were listed as *kings*. The millennial life-span is a reflection of the princely office of believers who are sons of “the King of kings.” Believers reign with Christ in God’s Kingdom (Eph. 2:6).

The emphasis on the reigning aspects of the millennium tends to obscure the fact that John also communicates a long life-span. He says clearly that those who partook of the first resurrection “lived... for a thousand years.” John is talking about *one* generation, made clear by the pronoun “they.” John is not talking about generation after generation of believers who span some millennial epoch of human history or the

“Church age.” He is very specific that “*they* lived... for a thousand years,” speaking of that first generation of Christians who believed the gospel and underwent persecution to death. He references those who first tasted the eternal life that Jesus Christ came to give that would forever end “the death” introduced by Adam’s sin. They had Christ’s life in them and they lived a thousand years. It is also highly significant that John makes no mention of these saints ever dying once they “came to life.”

The millennial life-span is the same type of symbolic numerology we find in Genesis. Others have made this connection without grasping the full implications. Jordan draws a link between the life-spans mentioned in Genesis and the millennium:

I think that Genesis 5 implies that the ideal lifespan is a millennium, which none of these attained.¹²

The millennium is also the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy ($100 \times 10 = 1000$ years). The significance cannot be avoided. Full life can only be realized through faith in Jesus Christ.

What so many miss about the millennium in Revelation 20 is that it is a *life-span* pointing to the accomplished work of Christ. Again, Jordan comes remarkably close to saying as much when he writes:

God’s Day for Adam lasted almost a thousand years (930 years) God’s Day for the New Adam lasts a full millennium (Rev. 20:4, 6).¹³

The comparison is easy to understand. The patriarchs were greatly blessed because of their friendship and communion with God. But they lived in *anticipation* of the coming Messiah. Their long (symbolic) life-spans could never reach the blessedness attained through the accomplished redemption of Jesus Christ, the Messiah and last Adam. Every one of them died before reaching the (symbolic) age of 1000 years.

When Jesus came to earth, he removed the Adamic curse, “the death,” for all those who live in the Holy City. Believers have access to the tree of life for ever and ever. Every generation of God’s faithful people live (symbolically) a thousand years, because they live “in Christ.” *They have eternal life.*

This millennial life-span is a historical reference directly to that first *generation* of Christians who lived during the 40 years between the ministry and coming of Christ in AD 70. That was when the true light came into the world. However, every redeemed life since then (together with

the Old Testament saints in glory, see Heb. 11:39-40) is a new millennial life-span, for God's people continue to reign with the King of kings in the glorious Kingdom of God. This is a symbolic life-span however, because the physical length of life is not relevant to the eternal life which all of God's people have in Christ. The millennial life-span, like the long life-spans in the early chapters of Genesis, is symbolic of covenant life. None of these long life-spans describe biological life and death in any way. Again, Genesis is a book of covenant life and covenant death.

We will consider the significance of the millennium for biblical views of prophecy in Chapter 20. The key is to note that John's millennium (like so many things in Revelation) has roots in the early chapters of Genesis. The millennium, understood in terms of a symbolic life-span of the redeemed, is another link between the early chapters of Genesis and the book of Revelation.

This covenant view of the long life-spans in Genesis is the one view which makes sense out of the staggering figures mentioned in early Genesis, and demonstrates that the physical world Adam experienced truly is "our world." Indeed, believers continue to enjoy long (1000 year) life-spans because they have eternal life and can never die. The apocalyptic life-spans in Genesis are all about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 17

THE COVENANT GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST



This book has pursued a biblically-oriented interpretation of both ends of the Bible. Our approach is based on the belief that there is a profound connection, on many levels, between the beginning and the end. The story begun in Genesis concludes in Revelation. That means a proper understanding of the book of Revelation has tremendous implications for the interpretation of creation in Genesis. The reverse is also true. A proper understanding of the early chapters of Genesis has tremendous implications for the interpretation of Revelation.

Our goal in this chapter is to highlight this connection and demonstrate how the gospel of Jesus Christ fits into the wider context of covenant creation and covenant eschatology. If we can show how the same principles of *covenant context* apply to the ministry and work of Jesus Christ at the very center of our Bible, then we have another compelling reason to believe this covenant principle of interpreting the Bible is the best way to understand it on its own terms. We have demonstrated a covenant view of the end. We have demonstrated a covenant view of the beginning. We believe the gospel of Jesus Christ comes to us in the same covenant context as the beginning and the end.

Abraham's Only Son?!

The covenant priority of the gospel of Jesus Christ begins in Genesis. Consider this familiar story in Genesis:

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, *your only son, Isaac*, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offer-

ing on one of the mountains I will tell you about.” (Gen. 22:1-2 NIV)

This text should stand out to all those who insist upon a strict “literal” interpretation of Genesis. Literally speaking, was Isaac Abraham’s *only* son? What about Ishmael? Just a few chapters earlier Genesis says that Hagar bore Abraham a son named Ishmael (Gen. 16:15-16). Yet God called Isaac Abraham’s “only” son. How can this be? Does Genesis contradict itself?

The fact that Isaac is Abraham’s *only* son demonstrates that biology is not the primary focus of Genesis. The primary focus is *human life in covenant relationship to God*, and it is this covenant focus that forms the foundation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, beginning in Genesis. Those who insist that Genesis speaks primarily about biology and is plain historical narrative imply that God was mistaken when he called Isaac Abraham’s “only son.” Abraham had another son before Isaac. But Genesis is not making a biological statement. Just as the long life-spans in the early chapters of Genesis make a covenant statement about *covenant life* in friendship with God, so Genesis declares that Isaac is Abraham’s *only* son! Isaac is Abraham’s only *covenant* son, the child of promise.

Paul applies this story of Isaac to the gospel in the first century:

“It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.”
In other words, it is not the natural children who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring. (Rom. 9:7-8 NIV)

Paul, like the rest of the New Testament, is focused on *covenant* lineage. But this covenant priority is nothing new with Paul. The principle exists in Genesis which is why Paul could go to Genesis to prove the gospel he taught!

This covenant priority in the story of Abraham is reiterated a few chapters later when we are told that, after Sarah’s death, Abraham took another wife named Keturah who bore many children. Then we read, “*All these were descendants of Keturah*. Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac” (Gen. 25:4-5 NIV). The text seems to go out of the way to make it clear that these *biological* descendants of Abraham and Keturah were not “sons of Abraham”... yet. Isaac is Abraham’s *only* son!

There is much more that could be said about this story. Like so many other details in Genesis, this story points ultimately to Jesus Christ who

is God the Father's *only* begotten son. Consider the parallels between Isaac and Jesus. Jesus was born of a woman in the fullness of time (after a long wait), just as Isaac was born to Sarah after a long wait. Like Isaac, Jesus was offered as a sacrifice, but not on a mountain. Jesus was lifted up on the cross. Jesus is the one who received the inheritance from God the Father (Psalm 2:8-9). Genesis teaches the gospel.

The “Heaven and Earth”.. of Abraham

The common usage of “heaven and earth,” applied to covenant relationship between God and his people can be understood by looking deeper into the story of Abraham. The story of the life of Abraham occupies a prominent place in the book of Genesis and sets the context for the rest of Scripture. Abraham would become the father of the faithful, all those who believe God's promises and receive the righteousness that is by faith (Rom. 4:16-25).

The Abrahamic covenant involves two key promises that define the biblical “heaven and earth” in terms of God's covenant people. God promised Abraham:

I will make your *offspring* like the dust of the *earth* [*erets*], so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. (Gen. 13:16 NIV)

Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.” He took him outside and said, “Look up at the *heavens* and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your *offspring* be.” Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. (Gen. 15:4-6 NIV)

Note how the imagery of these promises, taken together, is drawn from the earth and the heavens. Abraham's descendants were to be as numerous as the *dust of the earth* and the *stars of the sky* (Heb. 11:12). Abraham's posterity was to grow into a great nation, and this nation is “heaven and earth.”

Before we trace out this theme across the pages of Scripture, we should note that the association of God's people to heavenly bodies may pre-date Abraham. In Chapter 16 we examined the symbolic nature of the long life-spans of the patriarchs. Could it be that the numbers

in that symbolism relate to astronomical calculations? Jordan implies something to this effect:

Barnouin points out that the patriarchs in Genesis 5 and 11 lived lives of curious numerical lengths. Enoch, for instance, lived 365 years, the length of a solar year. Kenan lived 910 years, ten times a standard quarter year of 91 days. Lamech lived 777 years, which is the sum of the synodical periods of Jupiter (399 days) and Saturn (378 days) (Genesis 5:23, 14, 31)... The years of the patriarchs corresponded to the time-governing periods of the planets and other heavenly bodies. Abraham's seed would be like this. They would be a heavenly people, gathered around God's heavenly throne. Their history would mark time.¹

Jordan's assignment of astronomical numbers regarding Kenan and Lamech seems a bit arbitrary, and at this time there is no clear explanation for the astronomical significance of all the other numbers in the genealogies.² The problem is compounded because various ancient texts offer different numbers for the life-spans of the patriarchs. However, Enoch's life-span of 365 years does appear significant. This is a perfect year of *solar* years. Thus Enoch is associated with the *sun*. He was also the seventh from Adam which makes him a "sabbath" man. The text tells us that Enoch walked with God and "was no more, because God took him away" (Gen. 5:24 NIV). Is it difficult to see a picture of Christ (the sun of righteousness) given these details in the life of Enoch? Enoch's life is prophetic of Jesus Christ, the "sun of righteousness," who also walked perfectly with God and was "taken" at the ascension.

While the patriarchs *may* have some symbolic, numerological association with the heavens, the correlation between "heaven and earth" and God's people is developed more fully in the star and dust promises given to Abraham in Genesis 13 and 15. The two promises are brought together later in Genesis using the images of stars in the sky (heavens) and sand on the seashore (earth)³ when God promised Abraham again:

I will surely bless you and make your *descendants* as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. (Gen. 22:17 NIV)

"Heaven and earth," perhaps from the beginning but at least from Abraham's day on, would be the nation of God's people who live by the same faith in the one true God by which Abraham lived.

The connection between God's people and "heaven and earth" reappears later in the book of Genesis. Joseph had two dreams that follow the pattern of God's promises to Abraham:

He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: We were binding *sheaves of grain out in the field* when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time *the sun and moon and eleven stars* were bowing down to me." When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind. (Gen. 37:6-11 NIV)

Joseph's first dream involved wheat, which grows up from the soil. His second dream involved the sun, moon, and stars which are all heavenly bodies. The children of Abraham through Isaac are associated with "heaven and earth" in the images of sheaves of wheat from the soil (earth) and celestial bodies of the sky (heaven).

For those of us who live in a scientific culture and age, it may be difficult to conceive how heavenly bodies or shocks of grain reference God's people.⁴ But this is how the ancient Hebrew mind worked. Joseph's family had no trouble identifying the symbolism of his *prophetic* dreams. His brothers recognized that the sheaves of grain represent Joseph and his brothers. They knew it, and responded in jealous hatred. Jacob understood the meaning of Joseph's dream as well. He knew the sun, moon, and stars represented the entire family: the sun symbolized Joseph's father, the moon his mother, and the eleven stars his eleven brothers. *The heavens were the whole family of Israel.*

Even Jesus talked like this. Jesus associated God's people with both wheat and heavenly bodies in his parable of the wheat and tares. After referencing the godly as "wheat" Jesus said those who believe in him would "shine like the sun" in God's kingdom:

The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. *Then the righteous will shine like the sun* in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. (Matt. 13:41-43 NIV)

Jesus' statement is all the more revealing when we remember that he is the "sun of righteousness" of which all the Law and prophets spoke. His people shine "like the sun" in the age to come because his people are made to be like him in the new covenant, perfect in righteousness and holiness. The stars were bright during the old covenant "night," but nothing outshines the sun during the new covenant "day" (Luke 7:28).

This use of heavenly bodies to reference the children of Abraham appears frequently in Scripture.⁵ Daniel looks forward to the time of resurrection when God's people who are wise will "shine like the brightness of the heavens" and "like the stars":

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise *will shine like the brightness of the heavens*, and those who lead many to righteousness, *like the stars* for ever and ever. But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. (Dan. 12:2-4 NIV)

Paul gives a clear indication that he understood Daniel's prophecy as reaching fulfillment in *his* day as the gospel was embraced. Paul uses stars to describe *believers* who had become wise unto salvation:

Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, *in which you shine like stars in the universe* as you hold out the word of life. (Phil. 2:14-16 NIV)

Paul's imagery helps unlock what many consider to be a confusing passage in the New Testament:

In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander *celestial beings*. (Jude 1:8 NIV)

What is the identity of Jude's reference to "celestial beings"? The answer to that question can be found in the overall context of the book of Jude:

For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord. (Jude 4 NIV)

These "certain men" are the same "dreamers" in verse 8.

The book of Jude offers many parallels to 2 Peter 2-3. Peter and Jude both speak of the judgment of the ungodly (3:7 and v. 15), the coming of the Lord (3:10 and v. 14), angels cast down (2:4 and v. 6), mention of Sodom (2:6-8 and v. 7), mention of Balaam (2:15 and v. 11), apostolic warning (3:2 and v. 17), the last days (3:3 and v. 18), and scoffers (3:3 and v. 18). Perhaps the most interesting detail about the parallels between 2 Peter 3 and Jude is that Peter says the scoffers are "coming" (future, yet imminent tenses) and Jude says the scoffers are "present" (present tenses).⁶ That helps set the context to understand the book of Jude alongside of 2 Peter 2-3 in its proper first-century setting.

When Jude says that some "slander celestial beings" he speaks about the accusations the unbelieving and apostate Jews made against the Christians, God's holy people. God's people are raised up with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly realms (Eph. 2:6). In this sense they are "celestial beings." Jude's reference is another example of how the Bible associates God's people with heavenly bodies.

This biblical imagery, which begins in Genesis, must be kept in mind as we read the book of Revelation which references stars "falling from the sky" and the heavens being "rolled up as a scroll":

I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. (Rev. 6:12-14 NIV)

Can there be any doubt that John refers to the "shaking" of the nation of Israel through the coming of the Messiah? Jesus cursed the fig

tree because it bore no fruit as a sign of a curse upon Israel (Matt. 21:19-21). The stars falling from the sky in Revelation 6 reference the Jews who hardened themselves in unbelief and were eventually cut out of covenant relationship to God because of their unbelief (Rom. 11:17-21). The sky “receding like a scroll” is an apocalyptic reference to the terminal end of the old covenant form of the nation of Israel, made obsolete because of the coming of Messiah. Of course, those who read the book of Revelation as a description of the end of the physical universe will inevitably miss the rich biblical symbolism and covenant-centered focus of the book. These images are drawn from Genesis, the “heaven and earth” of Abraham.

Modern Science and Biblical Interpretation

The problem for a “physical universe” interpretation of Revelation is worse than mere oversight of the biblical background and covenant context of the book. A “literal” interpretation of Revelation’s reference to sun, moon, and stars makes no sense in light of what we now know about our physical universe. It may have been acceptable to think of stars falling to earth in medieval times when no one could fathom the stupendous size and essential nature of stars in our universe. What about now? Does a “physical universe” interpretation of Revelation make sense in terms of scientific developments in the modern age?

Milton Terry, never one to overlook the blessings of scientific discoveries, saw a positive role for scientific research and knowledge to help eliminate absurd “scientific” interpretations of both the first chapters of Genesis and the book of Revelation:

And as modern scientific research has quite effectually exploded the literal interpretation of the first of Genesis, so it is in a fair way to accomplish the like wholesome effect in exposing the essential absurdities of a literal explanation of apocalyptic prophecy.⁷

Some old-earth creationists point out the discrepancy – in literal terms – of having planet Earth, the oceans, and vegetation created on Day 3 *before* the creation of the sun, moon and stars of the universe on Day 4. A scientific reading of creation sparks many difficult questions. For what purpose would God create vegetation on planet Earth before he created the sun and astronomical bodies of the heavens? How does this order offer any scientific relevance? What are the scientific implica-

tions of God's creation of light on Day 1 and the light-bearing bodies of heaven on Day 4? Is Genesis designed to deliver proof for the Big Bang theory? Is Genesis designed to deliver proof for flood geology and catastrophism? These questions suggest that a "physical universe" reading of Genesis creation is a dead end. The current debates over creation in the Church are unsolvable *because they are based on erroneous assumptions about the central subject of creation in Genesis*. Over a century ago, Terry pointed out the absurdity of viewing the creation account as a physical description of the scientific formation of the universe.

Some preterists apply Terry's approach to Revelation by using a modern scientific understanding of the universe *against* common "physical universe" interpretations of Revelation. Author Gary DeMar points out that:

If one star hits the earth, the earth will be vaporized in an instant. In fact, if a star gets even close to the earth, the earth is going to burn up before it hits. Notice [Revelation] 8:12: "Then the fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were smitten, so that a third of them might be darkened and the day might not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way." How can a "third of the sun" be smitten without catastrophic results on the whole earth and not just a third of it? All of this language is drawn from the OT and only has meaning as it is interpreted in light of its OT context—the judgment and destruction of nations (Isa. 14:12; Jer. 9:12–16).⁸

Following in the footsteps of Terry, DeMar implies that modern scientific knowledge reveals the absurdity of "literal" interpretations of Revelation. Modern scientific research explodes "literal" interpretations of Revelation as surely as it explodes "literal" interpretations of creation. Indeed, the "heaven and the earth" of Abraham, a covenant reference to God's people, offers the only *biblical* context and guide to understand the prophetic creation as well as John's Apocalypse.

Creation and Israel

Isaiah offers a clear example of the biblical *identification* of God's people as his creation, drawing ultimately from Genesis 1:

But I am the LORD your God, Who divided the sea whose waves roared—The LORD of hosts is His name. And I have put My words in your mouth; I have covered you with the shadow of My hand, That I may plant the heavens, Lay the foundations of the earth, And say to Zion, “You are My people.” (Is. 51:15-16 NKJV)

The prophet refers to the historical events of the exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Law at Sinai. This formed Israel into a new nation, the heavens and earth, the work of God’s hands.⁹

Even the historical account of the exodus offers a subtle allusion to the creation week:

Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel’s army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. (Ex. 14:19-22 NIV)

Does this look familiar in terms of the creation account in Genesis 1? Note the elements of creation: (1) separation of light from darkness, (2) division of the waters, and (3) forming of dry land by which Israel crossed the sea. This is a veiled reference to Days 1-3 of the creation week in perfect order! Three days and the entire family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are raised to new life from bondage in the land of Egypt.

Moses also utilized unique terms and phrases from Genesis 1 in his farewell address to Israel. Note how Moses addresses Israel:

Listen, *O heavens*, and I will speak; hear, *O earth*, the words of my mouth... (Deut. 32:1 NIV)

If Moses calls Israel “heavens” and “earth,” then why would Genesis 1:1 be written as a description of the scientific formulation of the physical universe? Moses knew that “heavens and earth” is God’s people,

formed through God's special *covenant* creation. Moses goes on to use unique creation language in reference to Israel:

In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling *waste*. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and *hovers* over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions. (Deut. 32:10-11 NIV)

Chilton elaborates on the clear connections to Genesis 1:

Moses uses two key words in this passage: *waste* and *hover*. Both of these words occur only one other time in the entire Pentateuch, and again they occur together, in Genesis 1:2. *Waste* is used to describe the uninhabitable condition of the earth at its creation ("without form"); and *hover* is Moses' term for the Spirit's activity of "moving" in creative power over the face of the deep. God is not careless with language. His prophet Moses had a specific reason for repeating those key words in his farewell address. He was underscoring the message that the salvation of Israel was a creation event. The Covenant on Sinai was a re-creation, a reorganization of the world.¹⁰

Of course, we are not to expect that the *physical universe* changed at the time of the exodus. This creation event in biblical history is a *covenant* creation – God made Israel to be his people and became their God as he entered into covenant relationship with them in the wilderness.¹¹

Creation imagery is not reserved merely for the creation of Israel. De-creation imagery is used when Israel broke the covenant and suffered God's judgment:

For My people are foolish, They have not known Me. They are silly children, And they have no understanding. They are wise to do evil, But to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the earth [*erets*], and indeed it was without form, and void; And the heavens, they had no light. (Jer. 4:22-23 NKJV)

Is the prophet speaking about the physical universe? No. The prophet evaluates the condition of the same "heavens and earth" Moses warned in Deuteronomy 32. Jeremiah is talking about *God's peo-*

ple. Again, Chilton explains the covenant background from which the prophet speaks, and makes application to “heaven and earth” language in the New Testament:

Another such text, among many that could be mentioned, is Jeremiah 4:23-31, which speaks of the imminent fall of Jerusalem (587 B.C.) in similar language of *decreation*.... God’s Covenant with Israel had been expressed from the very beginning in terms of a *new creation*; thus the Old Covenant order, in which the entire world was organized around the central sanctuary of the Jerusalem Temple, could quite appropriately be described, before its final dissolution, as “the present heavens and earth.”¹²

The prophets also speak of the future restoration of the “heavens and earth” in the same symbolic terms:

Shout for joy, *O heavens*; rejoice, *O earth*; burst into song, *O mountains!* For the LORD comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones. (Is. 49:13 NIV)

These are merely the most explicit examples of the identification of God’s people with the creation account. They demonstrate that the creation can only be properly interpreted within this over-arching covenant context.

The Messiah of Israel

Many miss the covenant background of the birth of Jesus Christ. Jesus was the promised Messiah *of Israel*. From his birth, devout believers knew that Jesus was “destined to cause the rising and falling of many *in Israel*” (Luke 2:34 NIV) – an astral allusion. In other words, Jesus was born into a *covenant world*. Author Don Preston offers this explanation of the context of the arrival of Messiah:

Great emphasis is often placed on the “physicalness” of the virgin birth to the oversight of the Covenant relationship, or the covenant world, of that physical birth. We are in no way seeking to mitigate the uniqueness of the incarnation. We are seeking rather to place it in the Biblical framework. *Jesus was born into the Old Covenant world of Israel!* He was “born of a woman, born under the law” (Galatians 4:4). He appeared in the last days of that Old World (He-

brews 1:1f; 9:26). Jesus was not born into the world of the Gentiles... Christ came into his own – the world of Israel (John 1:10-11) [emphasis ours].¹³

This insight will always be neglected by Christians who think of the “world” primarily in global terms, in the modern sense of planet Earth. But the details of the ministry of Christ show the initial *covenant boundary* of his earthly ministry. Jesus tells us precisely to whom he was sent:

Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.” Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.” He answered, “*I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.*” The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said. He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.” “Yes, Lord,” she said, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” Then Jesus answered, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour. (Matt. 15:21-28 NIV)

This healing foreshadowed the gospel restoration of the Gentiles to come, but note how Jesus explicitly states that he was sent “only to the lost sheep of Israel.” The bread (Jesus elsewhere associates himself with the “bread of life” – John 6:33-58) belonged first to the Jews through whom God would fulfill his promise of redemption. Salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22). With very few exceptions Jesus did not preach to the Gentiles during his ministry. Jesus even gave the disciples this same boundary when he sent them out the first time:¹⁴

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “*Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.*” (Matt. 10:5-6 NIV)

Paul emphasized the context and Old Testament origin of the covenant gospel of Jesus:

Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, *to confirm the promises made to the fathers* (Rom. 15:8 NKJV)

The Covenant Order as “The World”

This *covenant context* of the ministry of Christ must be grasped in order to rightly understand the New Testament story. We are told, for example, that Jesus was born into a “world” that did not recognize him:

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into *the world*. He was in *the world*, and though *the world* was made through him, *the world* did not recognize him. He came to that which was *his own*, but *his own* did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God. (John 1:9-13 NIV)

What was this “the world?” Notice how John’s second sentence restates the theme. The world, “his own,” did not recognize or receive him. Many assume that *the world* here refers to the people of planet Earth and by extension to all people past, present, and future. But is John really talking about the entire mass of humanity in a universal sense? John’s parallel structure suggests that *the world* refers specifically to the people in Jesus’ immediate culture, Jesus’ *world* of 1st century Judaism in Judea and Galilee.

John uses the Greek word *kosmos* for “world.” Many suggest *kosmos* must refer to the entire globe or even the physical universe, but *kosmos* simply means “order or arrangement.” A close examination of *kosmos* across the pages of the New Testament reveals that its meaning is usually limited to a specific context. John, an Aramaic Jew, appears to generally use *kosmos* in reference to the 1st century *Jewish* world. Paul, a Greek-speaking Jew,¹⁵ uses *kosmos* to note the fact that the gospel was bearing fruit, during his day, across the entire *Roman* (i.e., Greek-speaking) *world*:

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world [*kosmos*]. (Rom. 1:8 NIV)

Passages like these cause some preterist authors to note that “even the use of *kosmos* does not require a global reference.”¹⁶ That is important to recognize because *kosmos* is, in some cases, interchangeable with *ge*. Consider these parallel passages:

And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth [*ge*], from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. (Matt. 23:35 NIV)

Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world [*kosmos*], from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all. (Luke 11:50-51 NIV)

The significance of the use of *kosmos* in Luke 11:50-51 is the simple fact that *kosmos* can be used in reference to the *covenant world*. *Kosmos*, in this instance, is synonymous with *ge*. Neither passage refers to all of the blood spilled on planet Earth up until that generation in a global sense. Israel was to be held accountable for the innocent blood spilled in the *covenant world* during *covenant* history.

Peter appears to use *kosmos* in the same manner as John, for Peter’s main focus in ministry was the Jews, just as Paul’s main focus was the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7-8). Peter’s center of attention in the New Testament is upon the *covenant world* of Israel and her history. That was his *kosmos*. This contextual background illuminates why, when speaking of the flood, “Peter says that the cosmos was destroyed (2 Peter 3:6), a word that typically refers to the political order (hence, “cosmopolitan”).¹⁷ *Kosmos* is also used in 2 Peter 2:5 in reference to the flood which destroyed the “ancient world.” *Kosmos* refers to the established order of the covenant world when it is used within a Hebrew context.

The World God Loved

The covenant-centered meaning of “the world,” particularly during the ministry of Christ, sheds light on many biblical passages that have been read uncritically, and we believe mistakenly, in the modern sense of planet Earth. Consider how “the world” fits a covenant context in this famous passage:

For God so loved the world [*kosmos*] that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world [*kosmos*] to condemn the world [*kosmos*], but to save the world [*kosmos*] through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands *condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son*. (John 3:16-18 NIV)

Modern Christians generally inject “planet Earth” for “world” when they read this beloved passage. The scientific globalism at the heart of modern creationism and modern futurism is applied to John's *gospel* statement without a second thought.

As we have already demonstrated from Matthew 15:21-28, Jesus was not originally sent into the world of the Gentiles, but *only* to the covenant world of the Jews, the lost sheep of Israel. Given that clear statement, why should we read this passage as referring to planet Earth? Would not John's teaching match what Matthew recorded? God sent Jesus into the *kosmos*, the *covenant world*, to save the *covenant world* through him. There is simply no biblical reason to believe the subject in John's passage is planet Earth, at least not directly or in a primary sense. After all, there is nothing wrong with the physical planet we call Earth.

This covenant background becomes clearer when we consider the wider context of John 3. Jesus is talking to Nicodemus, *Israel's* teacher, about things he should have known from the Hebrew Scriptures (John 3:10). The whole conversation revolves around covenant history. In the immediate context before John 3:16-18, Jesus taught from a typological event in *Israel's* history:

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. (John 3:14-15 NIV)

Did all men on planet Earth look upon the bronze snake Moses lifted up in the wilderness? No. The story of the bronze serpent took place *in the context of Israel's history*. Reasoning by analogy, the world that saw Jesus lifted up on the cross was the *covenant world* of Israel. No one outside of the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus – or even cared that an innocent man died a criminal's death. On the other hand, many *Jews* saw the crucifixion (John 19:20). What happened on Golgotha has significance precisely

because of the covenant context of the event. Many overlook the highly significant fact that *Jesus placed his own crucifixion squarely in the context of Israel's history*.

Whenever Paul arrived in a new city, he went first into the synagogue (Acts 17:1-3). The Jews across the Roman Empire took first priority in the preaching of the gospel; Paul knew that the covenant gospel of Jesus Christ was given “first for the Jew and then for the Gentile” (Rom. 1:16). When we pay attention to the covenant context of the gospel we will understand, as the early Church clearly did, that there is an order by which God worked salvation out in history. “Gentile salvation would be accomplished when and only when the promises to Israel were accomplished.”¹⁸

Also consider that in John 3:16-18 Jesus says those who believe in him are “not condemned,” but those who do not believe in him “stand condemned *already*” (v. 18). The covenant context illuminates that statement. God told all of his people in that world through the Law and prophets that salvation would come through Messiah. Those who rejected the Messiah were already condemned *because the Law and prophets warned this world to believe in the Messiah or face condemnation* in places like Deuteronomy 18:15-19 and Malachi 3:1-2. Thus, those who did not believe in Jesus were *already* condemned during Jesus’ ministry by their own Law and prophets.

Jesus is not the only one to place his sacrificial death in the context of Israel’s history:

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said,
“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the
world [*kosmos*].” (John 1:29 NIV)

The fact that Jesus is the passover lamb again highlights the *covenant context* of Christ’s redemption. The original passover during the exodus applied to *God’s people*. Did the blood of the first passover, applied to the doorpost of the Hebrews, take away the sin of planet Earth? No. It covered, in a typological sense, the sin of God’s people, *the covenant world of the Hebrews and those who joined their ranks by faith* (Ex. 12:38). This is the world God loved. The gospel of Jesus Christ can only be understood properly in the covenant context of biblical history.

The covenant nuance of *kosmos* in the gospels can also be seen a few chapters later in John’s gospel. Before the crucifixion Jesus told his disciples:

If the world [*kosmos*] hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world [*kosmos*], it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world [*kosmos*], but I have chosen you out of the world [*kosmos*]. That is why the world [*kosmos*] hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: “No servant is greater than his master.” *If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching they will obey yours also.* (John 15:18-20 NIV)

What was “the world” that hated Jesus? Remember, Jesus said these things *before* the crucifixion. Did the Gentile world hate Jesus during his ministry? Did the Gentile world persecute Jesus during his ministry? Did the Gentile world obey Christ’s teaching during his ministry? The answer to all these questions is simply “no.” In every case Jesus’ words *can only apply to the old covenant world of Israel*. That was the world into which he was born, the world he chose his disciples “out of,” and the world to which he ministered before the resurrection:

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. *But now they have seen these miracles*, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. (John 15:22-24 NIV)

What “world” witnessed the miracles of Christ? The answer, again, is the old covenant world of Israel. Jesus did not do miracles across planet Earth or even across the Roman Empire. His ministry took place in a Jewish context. The “sin” Jesus references in this passage is not abstract. He is not speaking about individual moral failure people today think of as common to humanity. Jesus speaks about a *particular* sin related to the *demand of faith* which God placed on the covenant people – “to believe in the name of Jesus Christ” (1 John 3:23). This is the categorical demand of the message of Jesus – “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent” (John 6:29 NIV)

Inherit the Earth

The covenant context of the gospel is made plain in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount.¹⁹ Notice what Jesus promises in the beatitudes:

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth [ge].
(Matt. 5:5 NIV)

The Greek word for earth is *ge*, the same word used throughout the New Testament (particularly the book of Revelation) in reference to “the land” of Israel. Yet how do many Christians read this promise? They assume that Jesus’ promise is related to *planet Earth*. The modern age, with its scientific conception of planet Earth, has created a distortion for modern Christian understanding of the *covenant promise* Jesus made to his disciples. *They were going to inherit the true land of promise by faith*. Meek believers in Jesus Christ inherited the covenant world which embodies the substance of all of God’s covenant promises.²⁰ Jesus’ promise about his followers inheriting “the land,” *ge*, is related to this teaching in the book of Hebrews:

Therefore, since the *promise* of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. *For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did*; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. *Now we who have believed enter that rest...* For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God. (Heb. 4:1-3, 8-9 NIV)

The writer of Hebrews taught the gospel in terms of the promise given to Abraham, for Abraham believed the gospel. In fact, the text says the people coming out of Egypt had *the gospel* preached to them!

All of the common views of Bible prophecy we know today were developed in the shadow of the modern age and the Scientific Revolution where the modern conception of earth is global. This fact explains why all common prophetic views interpret Jesus’ promise in Matthew 5:5 in global terms. Pre-millennialism sees the fulfillment of this promise in the future when Jesus sits on a physical throne in Jerusalem and rules *planet Earth*. Postmillennialism sees the fulfillment of this promise in the future when the gospel goes out and converts *planet Earth* to Christianity. Even Amillennialism thinks in terms of planet Earth by viewing the “end of the age” in the future as the end of history on *planet Earth*. This errant global interpretation drives each view into a commonly shared presupposition of futurism. These three views are inher-

ently defined by *global* conceptions unique to the modern age; it is this “globalism” which drives the futurist expectations of Christians today.

None of the common views mentioned above are truly *covenantal* in their understanding of the promise of Jesus in Matthew 5:5. Jesus promised that believers would inherit “*the land*,” *ge*, of God’s covenant relationship, fellowship, and blessing. And they did. The new heaven and the new earth arrived right on schedule.

The Apostles and the Covenant World

It stands to reason that if the gospel of Jesus Christ comes to us within the context of a covenant world, then the apostles’ teaching follows suit. One representative example is found in Paul’s conclusion to Galatians:

Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. Not even those who are circumcised obey the law yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh. May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world [*kosmos*] has been crucified to me, and I to the world [*kosmos*]. (Gal. 6:12-14 NIV)

The context of the entire book of Galatians is Judaism. Some Jews had convinced at least some of the Gentile Christians in the churches across Galatia that they were required to be circumcised in order to receive the gospel (Gal. 1). Paul’s point is that any requirement of observance of the Law *in order to receive the blessings of God’s promises* makes the covenant gospel of Jesus Christ null and void (Gal. 5:4).

Paul makes his case throughout the book.²¹ The Jerusalem Church did not compel Titus, a gentile, to be circumcised (Gal. 2:3). If righteousness comes through observance of the Law, then Christ died in vain (Gal. 2:21). Did Abraham receive God’s promises after he was circumcised or before? Abraham *believed* God and it was counted to him as righteousness (Gal. 3:6). The promise was given 430 years *before* the Law, so how can the Law be the *means* to attain the good promises of God (Gal. 3:17-18)? Both Ishmael and Isaac were sons of Abraham after the flesh, yet it was Isaac who was the son of promise (Gal. 4:28-29). If cutting the flesh is really important to God, then Paul says they should

go the whole way and cut it all off (Gal. 5:11). After many convincing arguments from Paul's own history, as well as covenant history, Paul closes with a remarkable statement about the *kosmos* being crucified to him and he being crucified to the *kosmos*.

Does it make any sense, given the context of the entire book, that Paul intended his conclusion to read, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which [planet Earth] has been crucified to me, and I to [planet Earth]"? No. That would be quite absurd. Planet Earth was very much alive to Paul and Paul was very much alive to planet Earth by the power of the Spirit as the history of Western Civilization documents in the last 2000 years. *Kosmos*, in this instance, has *nothing* to do with the physical universe.

Paul's reference to "the world" fits the covenant context of Galatians as well as the covenant context of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The *old covenant world* was crucified to Paul and Paul was crucified to the *old covenant world*. The coming of Jesus Christ made that order or arrangement, that system, entirely obsolete. The covenant context of Paul's statement is repeated in the next statement Paul makes:

Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a *new creation*. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to *the Israel of God*. (Gal. 6:15-16 NIV)

Paul's point is that God's people are made a *new creation* through faith in Jesus Christ. Believers enter the *Israel of God* by faith. Once again, the definition of "creation" is personal and human, and is not defined in terms of the physical universe. *The "new creation" is God's people.*

Author Douglas Wilson elaborates on what it means to become a part of this new creation:

So regeneration is an act of God's kindness and power, in which He changes me from one kind of human being (with Adam as a father) to another kind of human being (with the last Adam as a father). Before, during and after the process, I am a human being. In that respect nothing changes. But with regard to who my father is... everything changes.²²

Christians widely understand that conversion to Christ entails no *biological* change. We are the same *physical* human beings before con-

version to Christ as after. The issue is covenant lineage. Believers become new covenant creations. As we will develop more fully in the next chapter, the *nature* of the new creation reveals the *nature* of both the original “heavens and earth” in Genesis 1:1 and the “new heaven and new earth” in Revelation 21:1. *These are covenant worlds*. They manifest themselves in God’s physical world through physical human beings and their realm of influence, but are not defined in any way by the physical universe. God’s new creation lives in the new heaven and new earth, the “home of righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13). This is just another way to say that the Bible is about *covenant* history and *offers no scientific detail about the history or future of our physical universe*.

Living on Earth and the End of the World

James, a book written to the “twelve tribes” of Israel (James 1:1) also demonstrates this covenant context:

You have lived on earth [*ge*] in luxury and self-indulgence.
You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You
have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were
not opposing you. (James 5:5-6 NIV)

To whom does James write? James addresses those who lived in the *covenant* world at the time. Unbelieving Jews in his day not only condemned the Messiah to death, they also began to kill Christians who believed that all the Law and prophets spoke of Jesus Christ. James’ statement cannot apply to all the rich who live across planet Earth; he is speaking to those who claimed to have a covenant relationship to God, for it was the Jews who instigated the persecution of Christians in the first century.

The apostle Peter works from this same covenant context:

For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to
those who are *now dead*, so that they might be judged ac-
cording to men in regard to the body, but live according to
God in regard to the spirit. *The end of all things is near*. (1
Peter 4:6-7 NIV)

The “now dead” in Peter’s teaching was Israel who was in need of resurrection from sin-death. Note how Peter identifies conversion to Christ as resurrection from the dead. He does not speak about biology or *physi-*

cal life and death at all. Many overlook that context when they read the startling statement which comes next: “The end of all things is near.”

The reason many have difficulty with what Peter promises is because of the common “physical universe” definition of “the end.” Covenant context is the key to understand Peter. When Peter says “The end of all things is near” he is referring to the end of a *covenant world*, not the physical universe. He was right.

Atoning for the Sins of the World

The apostle John also speaks within this same covenant context when he proclaims the gospel:

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world [*kosmos*]. (1 John 2:2 NIV)

It is common to view John’s statement in a universal or global sense because of a “planet Earth” interpretation of *kosmos* rather than a “covenant” interpretation of *kosmos*. Given the covenant connotation of *kosmos* in John’s gospel we examined above, it is much better to view John’s statement to be related to the gospel proclaimed by the author of Hebrews:

These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that *only together with us* would they be made perfect. (Heb. 11:39-40)

When John says that Jesus is “the atoning sacrifice for our sins and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” in 1 John 2:2, he is speaking of the entire *covenant world* of God’s faithful people. Jesus perfected the first century Christians *together* with all the faithful people in covenant history (the whole world) by his atoning blood of the covenant. Even today, people enter into this redeemed covenant world, this kingdom, by faith in Christ and become part of what Paul called “the Israel of God.”

John offers his concluding vision of Revelation in terms that would be familiar to any who knew the details of Israel’s history:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them.

They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.” (Rev. 21:3 NIV)

This examination of the predominant covenant context of “the world” and “earth” in the New Testament is far from exhaustive. We recommend that you investigate some more examples on your own and see for yourself if this covenant connotation of “world” makes much better sense than the traditional “global” reading so common among modern Christians. We do not claim that *every* case of “the world” and “the earth” refers to a strict covenant context, but we do believe that far more examples bear that connotation than many who are taught a “global” reading of the New Testament could ever think possible. We recommend you to begin your own further study by looking closely at passages such as Romans 5:12-14; 1 Corinthians 7:25-31; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Galatians 4:3-5; Colossians 2:16-20; Hebrews 2:5, 11:38; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17; and Revelation 11:15, 12:9-12, 13:3.

Conclusion

The Bible is focused on “the world” God has always loved in the past and will always love in the future. *Our Bible communicates the covenant gospel of Jesus Christ from beginning to end and everywhere in between.*

The clarity and strength of the covenant context at the center of the Bible surrounding the gospel of Jesus Christ has profound implications for the beginning and the end in its own right. We devote the next chapter to offering a big picture view of the fundamental organizing principle of all Scripture. The Bible is about covenant relationship between God and man from the opening garden scene to the closing garden scene to which we now turn.

CHAPTER 18

THE BIG PICTURE



Creation and Consummation: Covenant

A clear demonstration of the inescapable relationship between the beginning and the end of the Bible is found in the final pages of Revelation:

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth [ge], for the first heaven and the first earth [ge] had passed away. (Rev. 21:1 NKJV)

An important question to ask is simply: “What is the first heaven and earth that John saw passing away?” The answer seems obvious enough. *John’s vision makes reference to the first biblical mention of heaven and earth:*

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. [erets/ge]. (Gen. 1:1 NKJV)

John’s prophecy brings “the first heaven and the first earth” in view and demonstrates a stunning reality. These are *corresponding* worlds. The *nature* of the new heaven and earth of John’s vision is no different than the *nature* of the original heaven and earth God created in Genesis 1:1! *John’s vision shows that the original “heavens and earth” in Genesis is necessarily consistent in character with the final “heaven and earth.* The primary purpose of both creation and consummation is to unveil the order and principles of God’s covenant relationship with his people.

John’s mention of a “new heaven and new earth” is a reference to the *renewal* of God’s original creation. This is made clear in the Greek John used:

The Greek word for “new” means new in quality rather than new in time... [I]t is a “new” heaven and earth and not a second heaven and earth...”¹

Don Preston further explains the distinction in Greek that does not come across readily into English:

There are two words translated as new in the New Testament, *neos* and *kainos*. *Neos* is new in time. It is that which has never existed before, or that which has recently come into existence. On the other hand *kainos* means new in quality, not time.²

John uses *kainos* not *neos* in Revelation 21:1, just as Peter used *kainos* rather than *neos* in 2 Peter 3:13. The heaven and earth John saw was new because it was a “made new” heaven and earth. This is best understood in terms of the concept of “regeneration” or “resurrection” (which fits what is in the text, *kainos*) rather than that of a “replacement” heaven and earth (which would fit if John had used *neos*). Preston elaborates on the significance of *kainos* and demonstrates that the “new heaven and new earth” is related to what had been in existence previously:

Who could doubt that the new creation of Christ’s kingdom could be aptly described as *kainos* in comparison to the old system. We have a new (*kainos*) covenant (Hebrews 8). The Christian is a new (*kainos*) creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). The church is the new Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22, Revelation 21:2). And, while *kainos* is not specifically used, we have a new sacrifice, a new priesthood, temple, nation and song. We are a new creation!³

To Preston’s examples we could add the reality of a “new” circumcision (Col. 2:11). Everything that is “made-new” in the new creation is drawn from the Old Testament, ultimately referencing the earliest chapters of Genesis within the purview of redemption. In this context the connection between Genesis 1:1 and Revelation 21:1 is conspicuous. Some of the very best in preterist commentaries reference a natural link between the original “heavens and earth” in Genesis and the “new heaven and new earth” in Revelation:

The spiritual paradise lost in the garden would be restored in Christ. The new earth described by the prophet [Isaiah] corresponds with the “regeneration” and “restitution of all things” spoken of by Christ and the apostles. (Matthew 19:28; Acts 3:21)... This is the “new heavens and new earth” shown to John here [emphasis ours].⁴

Terry drew these same connections more than a hundred years ago in his comments on Revelation 21:1:

This new creation is “the regeneration”... referred to in Matt. xix, 28, and the “restoration of all things”... mentioned in Acts iii, 21. This renovation, as Heb. xii, 26, 27, shows, involves a removal or passing away of that which is old and shaken.⁵

In Chapter 4 we showed how the New Testament generation looked forward to “The End of a Covenant World,” the passing away of the old order of shadows and types centered in Jerusalem and the Jewish temple. The “heaven and earth” language throughout the New Testament speaks of the same end of a *covenant* world which came upon the generation which heard Jesus teach in person. The apostles taught this end was incrementally “nearer” as the New Testament books were written and as the time period of that generation (roughly 40 years) gradually expired. *If the biblical “end” relates to a covenant world, then the biblical “beginning” also relates to a covenant world.*

The fact that the physical universe did not pass away in the first century demonstrates that creation in Genesis is not geared toward an explanation of the origin of the physical universe. Genesis 1:1 and Revelation 21:1 match.

What “Passed Away”?

By now it should be most clear that Revelation 21:1 references the same “passing away” of heaven and earth that Jesus taught would take place in his generation:

I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth [*ge*] will pass away, but my words will never pass away. (Matt. 24:34-35 NIV)

The parallel between Jesus and John, in reference to the “passing away” of “heaven and earth,” dovetails with Peter’s teaching on the subject:

But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth [*ge*] was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world [*kosmos*] of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth [*ge*] are reserved for

fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. (2 Peter 3:5-7 NIV)

Notice how Peter references the *original creation* when he says the heavens existed and the earth, *ge*, was formed out of water by water. That is a reference to the creation week of Genesis 1, particularly Day 3 (Gen. 1:9-10). Peter then includes the flood in his comparison; a flood which destroyed this covenant world with the exception of righteous Noah and his family (who became the new covenant “world” at that time by receiving a “new” covenant). Peter then compares both apocalyptic events in *covenant* history (creation and flood) with the “day of judgment” he expected to fall upon the “present heavens and earth” – a reference to the imminent, cataclysmic fiery destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. This would bring about the full manifestation of a new *covenant* world for God’s people:

That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements [*stoichion*] will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new [*kainos*] heaven and a new [*kainos*] earth [*ge*], the home of righteousness. (2 Peter 3:12-13 NIV)

We have diligently maintained that all of these statements regarding “heaven and earth” speak to the same “end of the age” transition from old covenant to new covenant. Terry’s thoughts are helpful at this point:

[T]he Apocalypse of John is a fitting conclusion to the biblical apocalypses and dependent mainly for its imagery on what is clearly traceable in the Hebrew Scriptures... it is in substance and scope only a symbolico-prophetic amplification of our Lord’s eschatological discourse as preserved in the synoptic gospels [i.e., the Olivet Discourse]....

The Old Testament apocalypses are a necessary introduction to the interpretation of Jesus’s eschatological sermon on the Mount of Olives and to that of the Apocalypse of John.⁶

Terry’s preterist work shows how New Testament prophecy revolves entirely around Jesus’ teaching in the Olivet Discourse. That is hardly controversial to those who accept preterism to one degree or another. But Terry went much further by hinting that the full ramifications of a preterist view of prophecy at the *end* of the Bible has seri-

ous ramifications for the proper understanding of the *beginning*. *New Testament prophecy plays a complementary role to the very beginning of the biblical story*. Terry suggested that the entire prophetic teaching in the New Testament, which revolves around Jesus' Olivet Discourse, completes the larger story of creation and fall first revealed in the early chapters of Genesis through the same form of apocalyptic communication we find in Revelation.

When we consider that the "heavens and earth" is, quite literally, God's people, past, present, and future, we cannot escape an important conclusion. The "new heaven and new earth" which the New Testament writers anticipated is, in essence, *the same* "heaven and earth" first mentioned in Genesis 1:1:

As the historic Church has always recognized, there is only one way of salvation, one Covenant of Grace; the fact that it has operated under various administrations does not affect *the essential unity of the one people of God through the ages*.⁷

What does John see in his vision of the holy city later in Revelation 21? He sees a city with *gates* upon which are written the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12) and *foundations* upon which are written the names of the twelve apostles (Rev. 21:14). All of God's people live together in the same city! The Bible is not about two (or more) "heavens and earth," but one.⁸ The original creation, beginning with Adam, was "very good," but sin entered this covenant world by his disobedience. God redeemed this world through Jesus Christ whose completed work reveals the "made-new" heaven and "made-new" earth.

So what passed away in the New Testament times? It was the old order *under the bondage of "the sin" and "the death."* What makes the "heaven and earth" (God's people) "new" *is that the curse has been removed*. Again, it is the "heaven and earth" *made new* (*kainos* not *neos*). It is the original "heaven and earth" order reborn or resurrected.

The transformations we see at various times in biblical history – Noah, Abraham, Sinai, etc. – are due to the *maturation* of God's people in history. As God's family grew to maturity, God modified the external manifestation of his government over them to match their maturity level as he continued to reveal more of himself to them over time. Jesus Christ is the ultimate manifestation of God the Father to God's people. The consummation of the ages marks the time when God's people become "grown-ups" in Christ rather than "school-children" under the tu-

telage of the Law until their new-found age of majority (Gal. 3:21-25). Now God lives with all of his grown children “in Christ” in a holy garden-city (Rev. 21:3-22:5). The garden in Revelation 21-22 is the garden of Eden all grown up.

It is not as if the original “heaven and earth” was defective from creation and in need of a replacement with a *different* heaven and *different* earth as if God starts all over brand new in the New Testament. This approach would resemble a dispensational view and separate God’s people of old from God’s people in the first century on.

A replacement view of the new heaven and new earth would also lead to a spiritual version of the very same mistake we discussed back in Chapter 12 with old-earth views of a new physical universe “replacing” the original physical universe ostensibly at some point in the future. The problem is that the end would not be like the beginning if the “new heaven and new earth” is a totally *different* and *unrelated* creation from God’s original creation in Genesis. Consider how a replacement view of Revelation 21:1 would resemble the basic structure of View 2 which we introduced in Chapter 11:⁹

View 2	
	world of Revelation 21–22
world of Genesis 1–2	our world

We pointed out the many serious problems with this view in Chapter 11. What do we find at the opening of the Bible? God pronounced that all he made was “very good,” *from the beginning!* Adam fell *in history*; God did not create Adam and the original order in a defective or fallen state. *This view denies a historical fall.*

Genesis 2:25 (NIV) tells us that Adam and Eve were “both naked, and they felt no shame” when God created them. The Hebrew word for “naked” in Genesis 2:25 is a different Hebrew word for the “naked” condition Adam and Eve experienced after the fall. John Sailhamer, a prominent Hebrew scholar, offers this explanation:

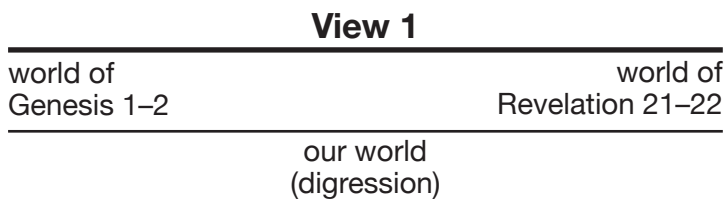
[T]here is a difference in meaning between [“naked”] in 2:25 and [“naked”] in 3:7. Although both terms are infrequent in the Pentateuch, the latter is distinguished by its use in Deuteronomy 28:48, where it depicts the state

of Israel's exiles who have been punished for their failure to trust God's Word.... In distinguishing the first state of human nakedness from the second, the author has introduced a subtle yet perceptible clue to the story's meaning. The effect of the Fall was not simply that the man and the woman came to know that they were ("naked") [according to the use in 2:7]. Specifically, they came to know that they were ("naked") in the sense of being "under God's judgment," as in Deuteronomy 28:48 (c.f. Eze. 16:39; 23:29).¹⁰

What is the original meaning of "were both naked, and they felt no shame" in Genesis 2:25? The original "nakedness" communicates nothing negative about God's original creation of Adam and Eve, for God declared all that he made "very good." We suggest Genesis 2:25 presents a pictorial image that fits the context of the story. Adam and Eve are God's "newborn" children. How do newborns come into this world? They are born naked and sense no shame. The rest of the story the Bible tells is the story of God's people "growing up" so that they can fully *recognize the Father they have always had from the beginning* (Rom. 8:14-16).

Ultimately, View 2 implies that the end is *totally different* from the beginning which means that the original creation is never redeemed but entirely removed and tossed into a (spiritual) cosmic trash can. A replacement view of the new heaven and new earth in Revelation 21:1 breaks the biblical order of creation, fall, and redemption. It suggests that God does not redeem his original creation, but rather disposes of it as a flawed or defective "first try."

Ironically, the young-earth view of natural history we introduced in Chapter 11 is accurate *when it is transposed to represent God's covenant world!* Consider the young-earth view with a *covenantal* rather than *biological* definition of the fall and redemption:¹¹



With the caveat that "our world" means not our physical world, but the *world* of the covenant people from Adam's fall until the redemption completed in AD 70, this diagram is absolutely correct. We believe this

view is the only one that does justice to the biblical story of creation, fall, and redemption. God *redeems* the “very good” creation he made “*in the beginning*.”*

Changing Clothes

We can also demonstrate this biblical connection between Genesis 1 and Revelation 21 directly from another biblical text. Like Jesus, John, and Peter, the writer of Hebrews saw an end of the “heavens and earth” and placed this end in the same context as the *original creation*:

And: “You, LORD, *in the beginning* laid the foundation of the earth [ge], And the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; *Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed.* But You are the same, And Your years will not fail.” (Heb. 1:10-12 NKJV)

Does it not appear that the writer has Genesis creation in mind? Virtually all commentaries on this text note the connection the author makes to Genesis 1:1 through Psalm 102:25-27. Like John in Revelation 21:1, the author of Hebrews saw the current (in his day) *garments which clothed* “heavens and earth” as being changed. This is talking about covenant transformation. The Lord would remain through the time of transition and his people with him. From other texts we know the outcome would be a “new [*kainos*] heaven and new [*kainos*] earth” (2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1).

The context of Hebrews is dominated by the emphasis on *covenant transition*. The recurring theme of Hebrews is the superiority of Jesus Christ. Jesus is compared to angels (Heb. 1:4-9), Moses (Heb. 3), and high priests (Heb. 4:14-5:10). The new covenant is contrasted to the old covenant (Heb. 8-9). In fact, the writer of Hebrews uses the same “aging” and “passing away” language we find in Hebrews 1:10-11 later in the book in reference to the *old covenant*. Notice also the time statement:

By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and *what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.* (Heb. 8:13 NIV)

* We will explore the implications of this historical view of the fall and redemption in Chapter 20.

The Mosaic covenant, with its laws, sacrifices, and its temple, did disappear. The whole book of Hebrews is focused on covenant history and the significance and primacy of Christ's place in that history. That is why the book is both titled and written to "Hebrews." The book deals entirely with the covenant world of God's relationship to his people beginning in Genesis 1:1.

That wider context of Hebrews illustrates why the reference to "heavens and earth" in Hebrews 1:10-12 has nothing to do with the physical universe. Even Psalm 102, the source and context of the "heavens and earth" passage in Hebrews, is not focused on the physical operation of the universe, but upon the *covenant people of God* and what was to take place in their future:

Let this be written for a future generation, that *a people not yet created* may praise the LORD... The children of your servants will live in your presence; their descendants will be established before you. (Psalm 102:18, 28 NIV)

Creation and Consummation are both entirely focused on God's covenant people.

Creation and Consummation: Physical Universe

It is easy to contrast a consistent covenant view of "heaven and earth" outlined above with more traditional views of creation and consummation. Common creationist views of Genesis and futurist views of prophecy maintain a consistent definition of "heaven and earth" as the *physical universe*. The reasoning is not difficult to understand. If the Bible opens with a detailed account of the formation of the physical universe, then naturally we should expect that the Bible closes with a detailed account of the final demise of our physical universe. That is, common views of creation and consummation define "heaven and earth" as the physical universe throughout the Bible, from Genesis 1 to Revelation 21-22.

This "physical universe" view of "heaven and earth" is consistent because the biblical examples are inescapably linked from beginning to end. One advocate for a "physical universe" interpretation of creation and consummation points out:

The statement in Revelation 21:1 (NIV) that in heaven, "there will no longer be any sea" makes sense in this con-

text—there will be no darkness, and no sea. Yet both play a major thematic role in Genesis 1.¹²

The problem here is not the connection Snoke makes between Genesis 1 and Revelation 21:1. The text makes that correlation clear. The problem is the *definition* of “heavens and earth” as the physical universe. Snoke assumes that John references the seas and physical conditions we find on planet Earth today. This view of the *physical nature* of the “new heaven and new earth” – rooted ultimately in a wrong view of the nature of the original “heavens and earth” – automatically leads to a futurist view of Revelation 21-22, for our physical universe still exists oceans and all.

Much becomes clear when it is recognized that Revelation 21:1 refers to the new covenant. Milton Terry, the noted authority on sound hermeneutics, warned of the common error many make when reading John’s vision:

And the sea is no more – To interpret this statement literally would be to bring confusion into the whole picture. *Heaven, earth, and sea* are mentioned as including all the “elements” (comp. 2 Peter iii, 10), and symbolic of what Paul calls “the fashion of this world” (1 Cor. vii, 31).¹³

What happens when the interpretation of “heaven and earth” is removed from the biblical context of covenant relationship and defined as the “physical universe”? Here is a lengthy yet informative quote from author A.W. Pink, a 20th-century futurist theologian. Note how Pink also draws a link between the physical universe interpretation of Hebrews 1:10-12, Revelation 21:1, and 2 Peter 3:10:

“Hast laid the foundation of the earth.” We have been deeply impressed with the fact that God has some good reason for referring in His Word to “the foundation” and “foundations” of the earth or world more than twenty-five times. We believe it is to safe-guard His people from the popular delusion of the day, namely, that the earth revolves on its axis, and that the heavenly bodies are stationary, only *appearing* to our sight to move, as the banks and trees seem to be doing to one seated in a rowing boat or sailing ship. This theory was first advanced (so far as the writer is aware) by Grecian heathen philosophers, echoed by Copernicus in the fifteenth century, and re-echoed by

science “falsely so called” (see 1 Tim. 6:20) today. Alas, that so many of God’s servants and people have accepted it. Such a conceit cannot be harmonised with “a *foundation*” so often predicated of the earth; which, necessarily implies its *fixity*! Nor can such a theory be squared with the repeated statements of Holy Writ that the “sun moves” (Josh. 10:12), etc. The writer is well aware that this paragraph may evoke a pitying smile from some. But that will not move him. Let *God* be true and every man a liar. We are content to believe what *He* has said. Paul was willing to be a fool for Christ’s sake (1 Cor. 4:10), and we are willing to be thought a fool for the Scripture’s sake...

“They shall perish, but Thou remainest” (v. 11). This verse makes mention of still another perfection of Christ, namely, His *immutability*. The earth and heavens shall perish. The apostle John, in prophetic vision, saw “a new heaven and new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away” (Rev. 21:1). But Christ “remaineth.” He is “the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.”

“And they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed” (vv. 11-12). This emphasizes the mutability of the creature. Two resemblances are employed: first the earth may be said to “wax old as doth a garment” in that it is not to last forever, but is appointed to an end: see 2 Peter 3:10. The longer, therefore it has continued, the nearer it approaches to that end; as a garment, the longer it is worn, the nearer it is to its end. May not the increasing number of earthquakes evidence that “old age” is fast coming upon it?¹⁴

Widely accepted geological theories about planet Earth’s past suggest that earthquakes are nothing new in our history. If anything, planet Earth’s crust is quite tame now in comparison to the geological past. One valid interpretation of the geological record is that God carefully prepared planet Earth for human habitation by physical processes which he designed. The Bible assumes that God created everything in our universe, but only in the age of modern science have Christians believed the Bible was given as a precise scientific description of that fact.

The key to recognize in the citation above is how Pink’s interpretation of Hebrews 1:10-12 applies a “literal” and consistent “physical

universe” definition to “heaven and earth” language from Genesis 1:1 to Hebrews 1:10-12, Revelation 21:1, and 2 Peter 3:10. Pink’s “physical universe” approach leads him to a dogmatic geo-centrist view of the universe and an unexamined futurist view of prophecy. He recognizes the profound connection between Genesis 1:1 and Revelation 21:1. Pink begins with a physical universe view of creation in Genesis 1 and logically ends with a futurist view of the biblical end. Like so many others, Pink’s futurism is rooted in what has become *the traditional view of Genesis creation*.

The Groaning Creation

Romans 8 is another biblical text, cited often in debates over Genesis, which further illustrates the direct connection between original creation and the story of redemption:

For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. (Rom. 8:22 NKJV)

The important question to ask, again, is simply: “What creation is Paul speaking about?” Again, the answer seems obvious. Paul’s teaching takes us *back to the early chapters of Genesis* which communicates creation and fall:

For the creation was subjected to frustration, *not by its own choice*, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the *glorious freedom of the children of God*. (Rom. 8:20-21 NIV)

Note how Paul is working from a *historical* view of creation, fall, and redemption. Notice also that the creation has a real will and consciousness. Paul is not focused on the physical universe. The universe was not cursed because the universe never sinned. What is Paul’s concept of “the creation”? The creation is synonymous with *God’s people*. Paul is focused on redemption. The creation, the entire body of God’s covenant people, was being “brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.”¹⁵

This makes sense out of why Paul alludes to a particular aspect of the curse in his teaching:

For we know that the whole creation *groans and labors with birth pangs* together until now. (Rom. 8:22 NKJV)

Paul reaches back into Genesis 3 and speaks of the fall of Adam and Eve, the point *in history* when God's curse entered this covenant world. Notice that Paul's reference to "birth pangs" matches a key element of the curse on the woman in Genesis 3:16 – pain in childbirth.

It may be that Paul references the curse on Eve in this text because Eve is prophetically symbolic of the Church. As we saw in Chapter 15, Paul made the connection between Eve and the Church in Ephesians 5:31-32. In Chapter 16 we showed that God's faithful people were the sons and daughters of Eve, rather than offspring of the serpent. They struggled under the curse of sin as they eagerly awaited the redemption to be accomplished by the seed of the woman first promised to God's people in Genesis 3:15 and reiterated later with the promise of the Messiah to Israel. *Paul simply expounds on covenant history in Romans 8:20-22.*

This idea of the "groaning creation" is not unique to Paul's teaching. Even David understood that *God's people* were "groaning" in Psalm 102, the very text cited in Hebrews 1:10-12:

Let this be written for a future *generation*, that a people not yet created may praise the LORD: "The LORD looked down from his sanctuary on high, from heaven he viewed the earth [*erets*], *to hear the groans of the prisoners* and release those condemned to death." (Psalm 102:18-20 NIV)

The Messiah came to free the prisoners (Luke 4:18-21) and save his people from death (Heb. 2:14-15). This is "the death" which entered at the fall. Indeed, the gates of death could not prevail against God's people (Matt. 16:18). The context of Romans 8 is focused on the deliverance of God's people from the original curse. *The creation is God's people.* This should not surprise us in the least because the new creation is also God's (redeemed) people in Paul's theology (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15).

Regardless of how we take Paul's allusion to "birth pangs" in Romans 8:22, the broader context of Romans 8 is clearly focused on redemption and the covenant change that redeems believers back into living fellowship with God through Jesus Christ which Adam lost. Or to put it another way, Paul's view of redemption is inseparably tied to Adam and Eve's fall and the original creation in Genesis 1:1.

A historical view of redemption requires a historical view of the fall. Adam fell *in history* and introduced "the death" into this world just as God's redemption in Christ is accomplished *in history*. This symmetry

in Paul's teaching suggests, as we mentioned earlier in Chapter 12, that the *nature* of the fall in Genesis 3 matches the *nature* of redemption offered through Jesus Christ. We merely press the implications further. The *nature* of the original creation in Genesis matches the *nature* of the new creation. Paul taught the gospel of Jesus Christ in the context of the full story of Scripture, beginning in the first chapters of Genesis.

If we read the first chapters of Genesis with the rest of the biblical story in mind, then the central subject of creation as God's people will jump right off the page at us. Consider how Genesis speaks of the creation in terms of *people*:

These are the *generations* of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heaven. (Gen. 2:4 KJV)

Why would God use "generations" to describe his creation? Because this is the record of God's *covenant creation*; this is talking about *people*:

The form of this verse is used several times in the book of Genesis... All the later occurrences refer to the generations, that is, offspring, of people.¹⁶

God formed a special people to be the *heaven and earth* from the very beginning. That is the creation story Genesis tells.

No More Curse in the New Heaven and New Earth

One famous prophecy in Isaiah highlights the connection between the creation and curse in Genesis 1-3 and the redemption and consummation that Jesus Christ brings through his work of new creation, the renewed "heaven and earth." The curse which entered at the fall in Genesis 3 falls upon three entities. They follow this order: (1) the serpent would eat dust, (2) the woman would bear children in pain, and (3) the man would harvest food only through difficult toil (Gen. 3:14-19).

Note how Isaiah's prophecy of the new heavens and new earth (fulfilled in Rev. 21:1 and related passages) picks up the same themes of the curse:

Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind... They will not toil in vain [*curse on Adam*] or bear children doomed to misfortune [*curse on Eve*]; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. Before they call I will answer; while

they are still speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food [*curse on serpent*]. (Is. 65:17, 23-25 NIV)

In the new heavens and new earth Isaiah foresees the *reversal* of the curse which fell upon Adam and Eve. The prophet reverses the order of all three elements of the curse in Genesis 3. While the original order of the curse is serpent, woman, man, Isaiah's order is man, woman, serpent. There is a clear connection between Isaiah 65 and Genesis 3. All of the elements of the original curse appear in Isaiah 65. This shows how both passages communicate the same way, through prophetic style, and should be read in the same light, i.e., symbolic of the world of covenant relationship between God and his people. Isaiah is drawing from the earliest chapters of Genesis.

Theologians of every background rightly recognize that Isaiah 65 is the background for the new heaven and new earth in New Testament prophecy:

What is fascinating is that, as of this writing, I have not found one writer that denies that Isaiah 65-66 is the source for Peter's prediction of a new creation [in 2 Peter 3:13]. Yet, while this is widely admitted, the force of this link is, for all practical purposes, ignored or distorted.¹⁷

This amazing fact raises a question that just begs to be asked. "What about the link Isaiah makes to biblical history?" In other words, *from where* did Isaiah get the original concept of "heavens and earth"? Is not Isaiah 65 based in Genesis 1:1, the first mention of the "heavens and earth"? Note how the "heavens" in Genesis 1:1 and Isaiah 65:17 are both plural! Isaiah writes with Genesis 1:1 in mind!

You see, in pressing for a link between Isaiah 65 and the *end* of the Bible we suggest that it is only consistent to accept his own link back to the *beginning* of the Bible. Isaiah did not invent anything new. He worked, by inspiration, from the past story he already knew! Everything at the end of the story originates from the beginning through Isaiah the prophet. The creation in Genesis 1-3 is as symbolic as John's vision of the new heaven and new earth in Revelation 21-22.

Isaiah 65 is a prophecy about the coming new covenant world. It is fulfilled in the first century when Jesus Christ completed his work of redemption and appeared "a second time" to bring salvation to his

people (Heb. 9:28). Its place in the story is powerful. Isaiah 65 serves as a great bridge that spans across the pages of Scripture, reaching backwards into Genesis 1-3 and forward to Rev. 21-22 simultaneously. It shows the *consistency* of the spiritual nature of God's creation and curse which matches Christ's redemption and consummation. The story of God's covenant people, the "heavens and the earth" begins with Adam and Eve. Creation and consummation both communicate the story of God's covenant people.

Covenant eschatology demands covenant creation!

Viewing the Big Picture

The essence of a comprehensive *covenant* view of the Bible is demonstrated graphically through the artwork on the cover of this book. Notice how the cover includes an image representing planet Earth in the bottom right hand corner of the front cover. This is symbolic of the message of our entire book. Look at the front cover and you will see the big picture.

Can you see how this image of planet Earth appears in the background, pushed off to the bottom right hand corner? You may have even missed the fact that planet Earth is on the cover in your first glance. That was our intent. We believe the story of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation is about God's covenant relationship to his people. That is why we highlight images drawn from significant events in *covenant* history front and center on the cover. What God did in Noah's day, Abraham and Lot's day, and in the days of the first century reveals the eternal principles of God's miraculous acts of salvation and judgment. We learn about the personal nature of God and how he lives in communion with his faithful people through each of these events in covenant history.

Planetary concerns related to the physical universe dwell, at best, on the outskirts of Scripture. The physical creation serves a subordinate purpose for God's people – God made the physical universe to *reflect* his covenant relationship with his people. Covenant is primary. Physical creation is secondary. This is true from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 21-22.

Consider this. Most other books about the Genesis debate feature planet Earth, the solar system, or something related to the physical world on their front cover. This suggests that the physical creation is primary in the Bible rather than the story of God's people. Likewise, the majority of books written about prophecy and the "end of the world" also place planet Earth (perhaps on fire) or other *global* images on the front cover since the

common futurist views of prophecy invariably speak to the *end of planet Earth* and our physical universe. Again, the biblical priority, at least at the opening and close of the Bible, is redirected toward the physical universe. *Common views of creation and consummation make the physical universe primary and God's people secondary in the story the Bible tells.*

The art on our front cover symbolizes the fundamental contrast between a covenant view of the Bible and the common “physical universe” interpretation of creation and consummation. We believe the Bible was never given to tell us scientific details about *how* God created the universe. It is enough that God's people believe this because of the infinite nature of the God we serve. And we do not deny that there are quite a few statements in the Bible that God made everything that is visible, the heavens and earth and seas and all they contain. We stress, however, that the fact of God's creation of the physical universe is largely *assumed* in the Bible rather than mechanically *explained*. The reason is because the Bible was given to human beings who *already* knew God. Many forget that the Bible was originally given to *God's covenant people*. Why would they need to be informed about the precise scientific detail through which God brought our physical universe into existence?

We should add here that the same principle applies to the other end of the Bible. The Bible was never given to tell us scientific details about the future of our universe, either. It is enough that God's people know, by faith, that the universe is entirely in God's hands. His children can rest in that fact knowing that the physical universe will fulfill all of God's intended purpose for it – however long the future, as we know it, might be. The just shall live by faith.

And so planet Earth, and the whole majestic universe that God made, pales in comparison to the incomprehensible fact that God dwells with man through Jesus Christ. God's faithful people are his treasured possession¹⁸ (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Psalm 135:4), and where his treasure is his heart will be also (Luke 12:34). What in this physical universe can compete with the reality that God loves and cares for his people? God raises them up to accomplish his will, reflect his glory, and live in his eternal kingdom. God walks with his people through the valley of the shadow of death. God is the protector and sustainer of all those who, by faith, enter into covenant with the God of all things. The scientific details of our universe, as profound as they may be, do not compare with the amazing covenant love shared between us and the Divine. The Bible keeps first things first.

PART THREE

CHAPTER 19

THE TEST OF TRUTH



To this point we have made a broad argument for: (1) a preterist or fulfilled view of prophecy, (2) a local or regional flood, (3) the existence of biological death and evil before the fall of Adam, and (4) a covenant view of creation in Genesis 1 through 3. Those interrelated beliefs form a consistent view of the Bible and complete a comprehensive case against the three pillars of young-earth creationism that we promised back in Chapter 6. We have also pointed out serious problems in popular forms of old-earth creationism along the way, particularly the method of turning Genesis (and Revelation) into a scientific statement.

By now you may have some burning questions. In Chapter 1 we promised to discuss whether it is biblically possible that our universe is millions or billions of years old. This is a key point of controversy among Christians. Young-earth Christians claim the Bible teaches our universe is less than 10,000 years old. On the other hand, old-earth Christians claim the Bible teaches a very old earth. Who is right?

The implications of covenant creation and covenant eschatology (preterism) undermine both common approaches to creation. But these implications also touch the relationship between science and Christianity in the modern world. Our claim that Genesis creation is not given to answer scientific questions or settle controversies over the age of the earth may bewilder the reader at first. On what is left for us to go? If the Bible does not communicate creation in scientific terms, then how can we know the age of our universe? Does it really matter?

Author John Davis sums up the contemporary difficulty for many:

The tension between biblical revelation and scientific empiricism shows no sign of decreasing. On one hand, one does not want to reject obvious empirical evidence, and

on the other, one must never make all truth subject to the scientific method, which is incapable of verifying essential, supernatural events.¹

The goal of this chapter is to solve this apparent dilemma.

Modern Christians face a problem. Either the universe is less than 10,000 years old, or it is significantly older. The truth is either one or the other. It cannot be both. The question now becomes: How can we know? By what standard can we find the truth?

The Bible and Christian Worldview

Our basic conclusion is that the Bible does not give us a *scientific* description of God's creation of the universe; the creation account is geared to the moral world of man's covenant relationship with God. In some respects the current debate over the Bible and the age of the earth is based on mistaken assumptions. However, the Bible can help us answer the question of the age of the earth by another way. The Bible, God's written Word, provides the Christian view of all things – what we call a Christian worldview. That Christians have not always understood what the Bible *means* is irrelevant to the fact that the Bible presents an objective worldview. Our presupposition is this: The Bible is true because the God who created all things is the same God who reveals himself in Scripture. The God of creation is the God of the Bible.

Sometimes the Bible communicates directly about our experience in a plain manner. The Bible gives many concrete examples of evil thoughts and actions along with God's condemnation of them. We can also see evil thoughts and actions in our world. We know the Bible speaks directly against immorality of all kinds including injustice, rebellion, hatred, adultery, murder, coveting, stealing, idolatry, etc. Conversely, we know the Bible commends godly worship, faith, love, hard work, family life, charity, purity, etc. These things are explicit in Scripture.

There is another level at which the Bible provides a Christian worldview – a *foundational* level. At some level, the Bible is the foundation (or at least should be) for everything a Christian believes about the world. Though the Bible is not a textbook about chemistry, it is relevant to chemistry. Though the Bible is not a textbook about business, it is relevant to business. Though the Bible is not a textbook about the arts, it is relevant to the arts. Though the Bible is not a political book, it is relevant to politics in any age. The Bible addresses all of these things indirectly in various ways. We believe the same is true for science. Though

the Bible is not a science textbook, it is relevant to science. It is no coincidence that modern science arose out of a self-consciously Christian culture. The Bible offers the key to answer the controversy among Christians over the age of the earth. The key to solve the debate lies in how the Bible teaches us to find the truth.

The Biblical Standard for Truth

Non-believers sometimes wonder if there is such a thing as truth. But those who deny truth have to first assume truth; they believe the statement “there is no truth” is, well, *true*. Pilate asked a more famous question in his day and ours: “*What* is truth?” Philosophers and theologians have been asking the same thing ever since, but we still have no generally agreed upon answer. The prospects for an answer from that source do not look good.

Lost in the confusion and rhetoric is a simple fact. The Bible is far more practical than most philosophers and theologians. Have you ever noticed that the Bible not only records truth (“Thy word is truth” – John 17:17 KJV), but also provides *evidence* for the truth? In fact, very early in the Bible God tells his people through Moses how to know something is true:

A matter must be established by the testimony of *two or three witnesses*. (Deut. 19:15 NIV)

Paul agreed and told the early Church the same thing:

Every matter must be established by the testimony of *two or three witnesses*. (2 Cor. 13:1 NIV)

This biblical principle is the foundation of our modern legal system. The law system in Western Civilization has deep roots in the biblical standard for truth. Our system of courts, juries, and judges is based on the notion that the best way to find the truth of any disputed matter is through the presentation and investigation of *evidence* and *testimony*. Some have called this the historical-legal method, but this *empirical* standard for *justice* is grounded in the *biblical standard for truth*.

The Bible is unique among “holy” books. It applies its own standard for truth to the Christian message it proclaims. Both Moses and Paul knew the faith they proclaimed must undergo this same test for truth: they recorded the historical *evidence* for their faith.

The entire New Testament highlights the role of evidence to justify the Christian faith. Luke gives this explanation of the purpose of his gospel record:

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that *have been fulfilled among us*, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were *eyewitnesses* and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have *carefully investigated* everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that *you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught*. (Luke 1:1-4 NIV)

Luke says that a careful investigation of the *evidence*, offered by eyewitness testimonies, leads to *certainty* about the truth of the Gospel. Luke reiterates the role of proofs in his introductory comments to Acts:

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave *many convincing proofs* that he was alive. (Acts 1:1-3 NIV)

Those who wrote the Bible were very careful to record evidence and testimonies for the historical events they knew were central to the Christian faith. Jesus was seen by hundreds of witnesses after his resurrection, and his disciples ate and drank with him (Acts 10:39-41).

Even Jesus appealed to the testimony of many witnesses to establish the legitimacy of his message. Jesus did not say, "Believe me because I told you to believe me." That would have been out of character with the biblical test for truth. The Christian faith never calls for faith *in spite of* the evidence or faith *without any* evidence. Jesus said his testimony about himself alone could not establish the truth of his teaching:

If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid. You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. (John 5:31-33 NIV)

Jesus gave John the Baptist as a witness. But Jesus did not rely upon John's lone witness. Later in the gospel of John, Jesus added two more witnesses as evidence for the truth of his claims and teaching:

Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going... I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid. I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me. (John 8:14, 16-18 NIV)

Considering these passages together we find three witnesses presented as evidence to back up the claims and teaching of Jesus: (1) John's testimony, (2) Jesus' testimony, and (3) the Father's testimony. Three witnesses established that Jesus is the Messiah. Those who rejected Jesus rejected the truth *because they rejected the testimony of many witnesses*.

The many miracles Jesus performed were given as signs (evidence) so that the people would believe (John 10:25, 38). Miracles in the ministry of Christ provided the *empirical proof* that Jesus was the Messiah. Notice how Jesus points to the *physical evidence* of his miracles when John's disciples came to Jesus:

When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you *hear* and *see*: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor." (Matt. 11:2-5 NIV)

Jesus expected all the people to observe the miracles he performed as hard evidence for the truth of his claims and teaching. Jesus provided *physical evidence for the people to know the truth*.

This emphasis on physical evidence continues through the rest of the New Testament as the apostles preached the gospel. Jesus sent out his disciples as *witnesses*. He told his disciples:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my *witnesses* in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8 NIV)

Christians often think of themselves as Christ's witnesses in our day. Though it is true that we bear witness to what God has done in our lives in his miracle of salvation and abiding presence, modern Christians are *not* witnesses in the same way as the original disciples were Christ's witnesses. They were witnesses because they bore *first-hand testimony* to the teaching, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. They went out to tell everyone about the *physical evidence* for the truth of the risen Christ. The explosion of Christianity in the first century was based on the Holy Spirit working through the first-hand testimony and evidence of the divine origin of the Christian faith. What else could turn an entire world upside down within one generation?

The later books in the New Testament allude profusely to the role physical evidence plays to prove the truth of Christianity. Notice how Peter relies on the testimony of many witnesses (Peter, James, and John) to establish the truth of the transfiguration:

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but *we were eyewitnesses of his majesty*. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves *heard this voice* that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. (2 Peter 1:16-18 NIV)

Peter knew that the truth of the transfiguration refuted the last-days scoffers, but notice how he argued. He said they knew the power and glory of Jesus because of what they *saw* and *heard* on the mountain. In Peter's mind, the observed evidence proved the truth.

John places the entire test of truth on the *reliability of his own senses* when he lays the cornerstone of his first epistle:

That which was from the beginning, which we have *heard*, which we have *seen with our eyes*, which we have *looked at* and our *hands have touched*—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have *seen* it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have *seen* and *heard*, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:1-3 NIV)

John finds the empirical proof so important that he repeats himself for emphasis. Now, imagine what John would have said to modern philosophers who claim that no truth can be known through the senses. That claim implies that John could not have known the truth by the very means by which he states explicitly that he knows the truth! John *knew* the truth of Jesus Christ *through his senses*: he *heard* the Messiah, he *touched* the Messiah, he *saw* the Messiah. *He bore witness to the truth because he could rely on his senses to evaluate the evidence and know the truth.* The New Testament presents the resurrection of Jesus Christ as true because it was *observed* by many witnesses (Acts 2:32; 3:15; 5:30-32; 10:39-41; 13:30-31).

The Bible gives God's people the standard to find the truth in our world. The truth can be known by the evidence as provided by the *testimony of many witnesses*. This has tremendous implications for the relationship between modern science and biblical Christianity.

Prophecy and the Biblical Standard for Truth

The empirical test for truth, as taught in Scripture, is an important evidence for a preterist view of prophecy. We tend to forget that those who heard Jesus teach in person had the Law and prophets to guide them into the truth of the coming Messiah. The Law and prophets spoke about Jesus (John 5:39). The empirical test for truth modeled in the New Testament originates early in the Old Testament, in the Law.

In the same passage where Moses spoke of the Prophet to come (Jesus Christ) he told the people how they were to recognize the prophets whom God sent. Moses gave the people an *empirical test* of a true prophet by telling the people:

You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him. (Deut. 18:21-22 NIV)

What Jesus taught in the Olivet Discourse about the coming destruction of Jerusalem and great tribulation would have been *feared* by the people of his day. Jesus (along with the apostles) claimed that the entire *Jewish* world would be utterly destroyed. What Jesus taught in the Olivet Discourse would have been extremely unlikely from the point

when Jesus spoke those words. The temple had been standing for centuries. The *Pax Romana* characterized the entire Roman Empire. Yet Jesus gave a deadline by which to test his prophecy:

I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened (Matt. 24:34 NIV).

The detailed predictions Jesus made in the Olivet Discourse provided an *empirical test*. The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 is *empirical proof* that Jesus was exactly who he claimed to be, and that Christianity is true. It remains an empirical proof for the gospel today, as does all fulfilled prophecy.

We organized the opening chapters of this book as an over-arching demonstration for the reader. The first chapters laid out the *biblical* case for the fulfillment of prophecy in the first century. But the case for preterism is incomplete if we limit the case solely to the biblical prophecies. Deuteronomy 18:21-22 commands the people to test *any* prophet that claimed to speak in the name of God. They were even called to test the Prophet who came in the name of God.³ The Scriptures demonstrate that Jesus' prophecies must be tested by *empirical observation*. Accordingly, Chapter 3 laid out the *historical* case for the fulfillment of prophecy in the first century.

Now here is an amazing fact. *The Bible says nothing about what happened in AD 70.*² It is interesting to note that we have no inspired Scripture which tells us that Jesus' prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple was fulfilled. How do we know Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled? We know about it by *examining the historical evidence*. Providentially, God preserved reliable accounts of the historical details, but the Bible makes *no mention* of the fact that Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed completely in AD 70. We dare say that preterism would not exist today if Jerusalem and the temple remained standing for centuries after the ministry of Christ. That hypothetical scenario would have been evidence either that Jesus was a false prophet or that Jesus' words should be interpreted to mean something else. But the *evidence* proves Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed exactly as Jesus predicted, and this empirical evidence is good reason to accept preterism:

Serendipity is the term scientists use for discoveries or solutions to problems that happen upon the person who is not looking for the solution. It has been there all along, but because of other factors preventing it from be-

ing seen, no one really noticed it. The evidence of a first century parousia is overwhelming in light of Josephus, Tacitus, and Suetonius... The historical witnesses to the events of the Jewish War with the Romans are now playing a major role in NT eschatological scholarship.⁴

The Bible does not need to say anything about what happened in AD 70 because it assumes *the legitimacy of observation as a source of truth*. The case for preterism is compelling precisely because the biblical case *matches* the external, observed historical evidence. God's written Word agrees with historical observation. Two witnesses testify to the truth of preterism: Scripture and history. Preterism is the only view of prophecy which fulfills the biblical standard for truth. This book was written to show how the *biblical standard for truth* works to determine what the Bible really says about the beginning and the end.

The reader may already see implications of the biblical standard for the debate over the age of the universe. The truth about the age of the universe can only be discovered, biblically speaking, by the *testimony of many witnesses*. This may seem paradoxical, but it is *unbiblical* to press the Bible into use as the *sole* authority about the truth of the age of the universe. The Bible affirms the reliability and importance of *empirical observation* as one avenue to find God's truth.

Modern unbelieving philosophers are quite perplexed as to how human beings can know truth in our world, but their problem is not a problem for the Christian who takes the Bible seriously. God created the world to be known by humans. And, interestingly enough, our *experience* bears this truth out as well.

How the Biblical Standard Changed the World

In order to fully grasp the profound implications of the biblical worldview for modern science, we need to trace out how this biblical standard for truth literally changed the world. The rise of modern science was only possible because of Christianity. As Francis Schaeffer, the renowned Christian thinker, points out:

The rise of modern science did not conflict with what the Bible teaches; indeed, at a crucial point the Scientific Revolution rested upon what the Bible teaches.⁵

Living within the concept that the world was created by a reasonable God, scientists could move with confidence, ex-

pecting to be able to find out about the world by observation and experimentation. This was their epistemological* base – the philosophical foundation with which they were sure they could know.⁶

Schaeffer and many others show that all science is based on faith. The scientist believes (but cannot prove) that the world is orderly. The scientist believes (but cannot prove) that the past in God's world is like the present. This faith provides the foundation of modern science. Only Christianity can account for predictability and the orderliness of the universe. "Life is predictable because God is predictable."⁷ That is why the Scientific Revolution occurred only within cultures impacted deeply by Christianity. Without Christianity modern science would not exist.

We should note here that the form of Christianity which gave rise to modern science was not modern dispensationalism (which became popular only in the twentieth century). The pioneering scientists of the Scientific Revolution lived and worked in an era when Christians widely accepted a reliable theology from the beginning of the Bible to the end. Christians in that day did not believe that God applied various incompatible "rules" for different periods of time (dispensations). The *theological uniformity* of the older Christian theology provided fertile ground for a *uniform view of the laws of the universe*. Schaeffer explains the implications of that Christian worldview:

What was the view of these modern scientists on a Christian base? They held to a concept of the uniformity of natural causes... God has made a cause-and-effect universe; therefore we can find out something about the causes from the effects.⁸

People, no matter what they have come to believe, still look for the explanation of any happening in terms of earlier happenings. If this were not possible, not only would explanations cease, but science could not be used reliably in technology. It is possible to so function in our universe that, because there is uniformity of natural causes, a man

* Epistemology is a philosophical term. When Schaeffer uses the word "epistemology" he refers to the theory of knowledge – that is, how human beings can know they can know.

may travel hundreds of thousands of miles to the moon and land within a few feet of his planned destination.⁹

Contrast that understanding of the world with dispensational theology which lies at the root of modern young-earth creationism. Dispensational theology not only has a negative view of science in these supposed “last days,” its insistence on catastrophic breaks in the history of the world undermines any belief in the uniformity of natural causes that is the foundation of modern science as well as our justice system.

We who live within a modern culture and context do not give much thought to the legitimacy of evidence and testimony in our lives. We take for granted the idea that evidence is a legitimate means to find the truth because our mindset has been profoundly impacted by the Christian worldview. But the importance and trustworthiness of empirical evidence was not commonly accepted by the ancient world into which Christianity was born.

Greek culture limited truth primarily to mental thought. The Greeks did not think of the external world as a reliable source of truth. Experimentation was generally limited to demonstrating what the human mind already comprehended through reason. The inevitable result was that Greek culture could never grow beyond intellectual speculation because it saw nature as living, eternal, and uncreated. Without a single, omnipotent Creator, nature was incomprehensible to the Greek mind. Nature responded to the whims and personalities of the various gods.

This is not to say the Greeks did not speculate about nature. They developed elaborate views of nature through reason. Plato and Aristotle became the authorities for philosophy. Euclid defined geometry. Ptolemy gave the accepted intellectual explanation for astronomy. Yet all of these remained primarily mental disciplines, organized by human reason alone. There was no concept of nature as an orderly system that could be understood *directly* by sensory experience such as observation and testing.

Christianity triumphed over the Greek and Roman mind in the centuries after Christ. This caused people to realize that law existed in nature because a law-giver had created nature. But this Christian worldview did not completely overthrow the old, established ways of thinking about nature.

Instead, the Greek view of nature was adapted for Christian service. Aristotle and Plato remained authorities while Christian doctrine formed to fit their categories and questions. Ptolemy’s system merged

with church teaching about the universe. Thus, the medieval period was governed by a great synthesis between Christianity and Greek thought. In true Greek form, the Christian view of a sovereign Creator became abstract (a mental exercise) and therefore non-practical. The dominance of the Church, East and West, entrenched further the authority-based approach to truth common in Greek thought. Schaeffer sums up the situation by saying:

But with the Arabs as with medieval Europeans, science was considered one aspect of philosophy, with the traditions of the philosophers, especially Aristotle, ruling supreme. That is, medieval science was based on authority rather than observation. It developed through logic rather than experimentation, though there were notable exceptions.¹⁰

Eventually, a few key developments brought the medieval synthesis to an end. The Age of Discovery opened up a new world for the European mind. The authorities had declared this new world unreachable and unknowable, yet there it lay before the feet of the explorers. Another development was the invention of the printing press which changed everything. The common man now had direct access to the Bible as well as other books that were previously inaccessible. People began to read the Bible for themselves. They began to see how the Bible not only taught that an immutable God created all things but also how this truth has many practical implications for life.

Within a short time, people began to understand that the material creation is real and good – to be used for God-honoring purposes. They began to see that the Bible demonstrates how sensory experience is a trustworthy means to find the truth. The Bible records Jesus *encouraging an empirical test* as proof for his resurrection:

Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have. (Luke 24:39 NIV)

Samuel Frost, a preterist author, demonstrates how the Bible assumes that empirical observation is one valid way to *prove* the truth:

As for Jesus eating, some have told me, and some have written in detailed theological treatises on this subject (like Murray J. Harris), that it only appeared that Jesus ate. He really did not digest his food! I am not kidding, folks. Sec-

ondly, as for Thomas shoving his finger into Jesus' still well opened holes, it only appeared to Thomas that the same flesh that was during his death was not yet glorified! Jesus played an illusionist's game! Rather, the Thomas narrative in John's gospel *proves* for me that the same nail holed, sword gashed, thorn crowned body that Jesus had before his resurrection was the exact same when it came out.¹¹

The principle of *empirical testing* to increase knowledge (*scientia*), modeled by Thomas, was revolutionary to the late medieval mind. No longer could any claim to truth be based solely on precedent or authority alone. Nature itself began to be seen as a truthful witness precisely because of what the Bible taught about nature.

Schaeffer notes this key element as the major shift from the medieval age to the dawning of a new age:

The foundation for modern science can be said to have been laid at Oxford when scholars there attacked Thomas Aquinas's teaching by proving that his chief authority, Aristotle, made certain mistakes about natural phenomena... Of course other factors were involved as well, but the challenge to the authority of Aristotle opened the doors for less restricted thought.¹²

This led to a mounting crisis in all aspects of life and set off a host of simultaneous revolutions in Western Civilization.

Geo-centrism and the Biblical Standard

Volumes have been written about the great conflict over astronomy during the 16th century. Secular historians often present the conflict as the quintessential religion vs. science conflict in which religion suffered a knock-out punch. The inference by these biased historians is that, from this point on in the modern age, science would rule supreme and religion would be relegated to the back seat. Many consider the outcome of this dispute to have wrecked the reputation of Christianity so badly at the beginning of the modern age that Christianity in Western Civilization has yet to recover even to this day.

While it is true that the battle lines conformed to a theologian (geo-centrism) vs. scientist (helio-centrism) divide, the roots of the conflict go much deeper. The debate was never characterized by a supposed "Christian vs. non-Christian" dynamic as many historians tend to imply.

The helio-centrists claimed to be Christians as surely as their institutional opponents. The real point of controversy was the issue of *traditional authority* and the legitimacy of the *empirical test*.

What many overlook about the geo-centrism debate is that the Church had accepted the ancient and pagan Ptolemaic view of astronomy which ultimately came from Aristotle. Author Gary DeMar explains:

The Greeks, specifically Aristotle, argued for an earth-centered (geocentric) positioning of the universe. Since the Bible says very little about science as compared to what we know today and expresses no comprehensive cosmological theory beyond that God “created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1), the sun, moon and stars are not objects of worship (Deut. 4:19; Is. 47:12-15), and the cosmos operates in terms of fixed laws, it was natural to look at practiced and studied theories that might explain how the heavens operate. Aristotelian cosmology was seemingly a rational choice. Unfortunately, it turned out to be the wrong choice.¹³

Early Christians conscripted Greek cosmology into service by simply adding biblical proof texts to the pre-existing, speculative view of the heavens. The Church accepted Aristotle and Ptolemy as the authority, and confused them with biblical teaching about astronomy.

Catholics and Protestants alike made the same mistake. While the Roman Church dealt sternly with a few of Copernicus’ followers, some leaders of the Reformational Church opposed helio-centrism as well. All of the geo-centrists rejected helio-centrism on *biblical* grounds. Martin Luther, for example, claimed the helio-centrists were proven wrong by Joshua 10:

People gave ear to an upstart astrologer who strove to show that the earth revolves, not the sun and the moon. Whoever wishes to appear clever must devise some new system, which of all systems is of course the very best. This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy; but sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth.¹⁴

Notice how Luther (along with the Roman Church) argued from *Scripture alone* to defend Ptolemy. What is worse, Luther read Joshua 10 as if it were a science textbook on astronomy. Geo-centrist theolo-

gians applied the same method to passages like Psalm 93:1. All the geo-centrists were adamant that the Bible defined the motion of celestial bodies. They claimed that those who accepted helio-centrism rejected what the Bible said about the heavens. Author Don Stoner explains what happened and draws a contemporary lesson:

It seems that Galileo's critics were guilty of the same mistake which many of the present-day young-earth creationists have made. That is, they took the *plainest* reading of Scripture as the "true" one and disallowed any alternative interpretations.¹⁵

Stoner's analogy is justified. The same plain literal approach lies at the heart of most modern views of creation. Like the geo-centrists of an earlier age, young-earth creationists tend to argue that the truth about the age of the universe must be concluded from Scripture *alone*. Young-earth creationists argue that a *scientific* reading of the flood account (young-earth creationism's Big Bang theory) defines our understanding of geology just as the geo-centrists believed Joshua 10 defined a Christian understanding of astronomy.

The geo-centrists were not on the winning side of history. God's truth has an uncanny way of winning out in God's world. Helio-centrism won the historical conflict, not because Christianity is false, but because the institutional Church had rejected the *biblical standard* for truth by rejecting the *empirical evidence*. Geo-centrism was rooted in Greek philosophy, not biblical Christianity. The new scientists forced the Church to let go of the ancient Greek cosmology. Ultimately this unleashed the Scientific Revolution and brought previously unthinkable blessings to human civilization.¹⁶

Much needless damage could have been avoided if the theologians who held cultural power in the 16th century had listened to Galileo's *biblical* and *scientific* defense. Galileo argued the same thing, in principle, that we have argued throughout this entire book. Galileo claimed that the common view of astronomy among Christians in his day rested on a faulty *interpretation* of Scripture:

The Scriptures are given to teach us, not how the heavens go, but how to go to heaven.¹⁷

Galileo's statement hints at a *covenantal* interpretation of the Bible. He does not deny the Christian faith at all. He simply claims the Scrip-

tures were not given as a scientific statement. Was Galileo truly an enemy of the faith? No. "Galileo was doing the church a favor by moving away from a paradigm that was misrepresenting the Bible."¹⁸ It is past time that a similar service is performed regarding the modern young-earth creationist paradigm that misrepresents the Bible from flood geology in Genesis to futurist views of prophecy in Revelation.

Some Reformation theologians, such as John Calvin, recognized that the nature of biblical language demands limits to what Christians should claim regarding astronomy. Note how Calvin accepted well-demonstrated evidence as proof for truth in astronomy:

I have said, that Moses does not here subtlyly descant, as a philosopher, on the secrets of nature... Moses makes two great luminaries; but astronomers prove, by conclusive reasons that the star of Saturn, which on account of its great distance, appears the least of all, is greater than the moon. Here lies the difference; Moses wrote in a popular style things which without instruction, all ordinary persons, endued with common sense, are able to understand; but astronomers investigate with great labor whatever the sagacity of the human mind can comprehend. Nevertheless, this study is not to be reprobated, nor this science to be condemned, because some frantic persons are wont boldly to reject whatever is unknown to them. For astronomy is not only pleasant, but also very useful to be known: it cannot be denied that this art unfolds the admirable wisdom of God. Wherefore, as ingenious men are to be honored who have expended useful labor on this subject, so they who have leisure and capacity ought not to neglect this kind of exercise... For since the Lord stretches forth, as it were, his hand to us in causing us to enjoy the brightness of the sun and moon, how great would be our ingratitude were we to close our eyes against our own experience?¹⁹

Calvin says, essentially, that Genesis is given in the language of appearances; it is not to be taken as a scientific statement. Christians still have great difficulty learning this fundamental lesson about Genesis. They also have great difficulty admitting, as Calvin clearly did, that reputable scientific labor can offer conclusive reasons to believe things about the physical world in which we live. This approach is not anti-biblical; it is the distinctly *Christian* approach to truth.

Christians now agree widely that Copernicus' theory, Galileo's telescope, and Kepler's mathematics present no real threat to the Christian faith.²⁰ God's majesty and creative power are magnified by Copernicus' breakthrough. The historical lesson seems clear: the Christian Church has been hindered far more by ignorant zeal and the *unbiblical* use of the Bible than true scientific advance.

What is truly amazing is that the entire conflict could have been avoided. A thousand years before this debate, Augustine voiced a wise warning that many chose to ignore in the 16th century. We quote him at length because of the astonishing relevance of his advice:

Usually, even a non-Christian knows something about the earth, the heavens, and the other elements of this world, about the motion and orbit of the stars and even their size and relative positions, about the predictable eclipses of the sun and moon, the cycles of the years and seasons, about the kinds of animals, shrubs, stones, and so forth, and this knowledge he holds to as being certain from reason and experience. Now, *it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these topics; and we should take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation, in which people show up vast ignorance in a Christian and laugh it to scorn.* The shame is not so much that an ignorant individual is derided, but that *people outside the household of the faith think our sacred writers held such opinions*, and, to the great loss of those for whose salvation we toil, the writers of our Scripture are criticized and rejected as unlearned men.... *Reckless and incompetent expounders of Holy Scripture bring untold trouble and sorrow on their wiser brethren* when they are caught in one of their mischievous false opinions and are taken to task by these who are not bound by the authority of our sacred books. For then, to defend their utterly foolish and obviously untrue statements, they will try to call upon Holy Scripture for proof and even recite from memory many passages which they think support their position, *although they understand neither what they say nor the things about which they make assertion* [emphasis ours].²¹

The sophomoric, know-it-all theologian was a problem even in Augustine's day. Sadly, many continue to ignore this wise advice today and foster needless controversy which defames the biblical Christian faith.

History provides a valuable lesson for debates over the age of the earth. Those who categorically dismiss an ancient earth as ungodly compromise do not recognize that their methodology runs counter to the Bible's own approach. Those who argue for a young-earth from the Bible alone or create specious theories of geology to prop up their *interpretation* of the Bible have fallen into a very old mistake. They repeat the error of the geo-centrist theologians of the 16th century and will experience the same defeat in the end. What about the *empirical evidence*? What about the biblical standard for truth: *the testimony of many witnesses*?

Liberalism and the Biblical Standard

We would be amiss to stop our historical overview at this point, for history provides more lessons. With the success and blessings of modern science over the next few centuries, many began to forget the biblical standard for truth upon which modern science is built. Gradually, people began to assume that the only *true* witness is the evidence that the natural world provides. This led to the rise of naturalistic materialism and the tendency to deny miracles.

Those who deny miracles because of *what they believe to be* the earth's testimony make a serious logical error. Unless they can provide the testable physical evidence proving the non-occurrence of miracles, the earth has not given witness to their anti-supernatural *beliefs*. Because the modern scientist does not have access to the actual physical evidence, no *scientific* case can be made. The materialist's case against miracle is merely an *assertion* that miracles are *impossible*.

Let us use a concrete case to demonstrate the problem for those who deny miracles on "scientific" grounds. The resurrection of Christ is the prime representative example for biblical miracles. Because the modern scientist does not have access to the physical data needed to test the resurrection of Jesus, the materialist cannot demonstrate scientifically (that is, empirically) that Jesus did not rise from the dead 2000 years ago.²²

Modern scientists speak openly about the limitations of science. This is certainly one of them. As Thomas Kuhn, the famed science historian, writes:

The scientist can have no recourse above or beyond what he sees with his eyes and instruments.²³

Without the physical evidence to test, there can be no *scientific* case against the resurrection of Christ. The natural world cannot provide *scientific* evidence against the event. Modern science can only provide a witness to the extreme rarity of such an event, or perhaps the impossibility of the event by natural means. The anti-supernaturalistic scientist or liberal who denies the resurrection must make a *leap* from the fact that he does not witness resurrections today to *belief* that the resurrection of Christ did not take place. This is not a conclusion supported by the *scientific evidence*, of which there is none. It is a belief based on a religious faith that asserts that only natural explanations are possible in our world. In the end, the naturalistic materialist is just as religious as the Bible-believing Christian. His religion is naturalistic materialism. The Christian's religion is supernatural theism.

What about the evidence? The materialist and the liberal who deny the resurrection of Christ are un-scientific, for we have *many written witnesses which establish the truth of the event*. The resurrection has been proven true according to the legal-historical standard used in the modern world. It would stand the test of truth in any court of law. The materialist and the liberal must reject this *evidence*, confirmed by the *testimony of many witnesses*, in order to reject the resurrection of Christ. The same is true of other miracles recorded in the Bible. The materialist and liberal have become un-scientific.

What is more, the unbelieving scientist must do this while he accepts the written testimony of fellow scientists in any given field. Science operates on nothing other than *the testimony of many witnesses*. No one scientist can do all research and testing. Findings must be written down and verified by other witnesses. Scientists must have *faith* in the written testimony of others. Why does he reject the written, eyewitness testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ we find among the multitude of witnesses in the New Testament?

Not only is the materialist and liberal un-scientific (by rejecting the eyewitness evidence for the resurrection), he is hypocritical to accept the testimony of many witnesses for conclusions in other scientific fields yet reject the written testimony of many witnesses of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus and all the other miracles recorded in the Bible. The materialist rejects the recorded eyewitness evidence because

he does not *want* the resurrection to be true, for that would prove Christianity true.

The truth is that few events in ancient history have been better confirmed by the testimony of many witnesses than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was attested by thousands of people who willingly went to their deaths rather than deny what they *saw with their own eyes, touched with their own hands, and heard with their own ears*. These were people who admitted openly that their own faith was in vain if the resurrection of Jesus did not happen (1 Cor. 15:1-19). If the resurrection did not happen, they knew they suffered and died for nothing. How many scientists would rather die than to deny the evidence they witness? Would that not be a sure sign that a scientist is certain of his observations? The same is true of the eyewitness accounts we have recorded in Scripture. These are credible witnesses. They provide eyewitness testimony to the historical truth of the resurrection of Jesus. Only dishonest, un-scientific people reject eyewitness testimony. True science takes *all* the evidence into account before drawing conclusions.

The end of the matter is very simple. In the supposed attempt to be “scientific,” liberalism has rejected the biblical standard for truth which underlies modern science. Without testable physical evidence from the events in dispute, no *scientific* case can be made against the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The testimony of many witnesses remains legitimate evidence the materialist and liberal refuse to accept because of their *religious faith* in naturalistic materialism.

Liberalism’s denial of biblical miracles is not essentially different than the medieval method of a single authority determining truth. They claim all truth is subordinate to the *single* testimony of the earth (which is, in reality, no testimony because the scientist does not have the physical evidence to test). Liberalism rejects the recorded *evidence* in order to protect its *materialistic religion*.

Fundamentalism and the Biblical Standard

The self-conscious Christian response to materialism and liberalism should have been to deny the validity of a single authority to determine truth. The *biblical* test for truth is the mouth of many witnesses. But instead of elucidating the biblical standard for truth once more, Christians reacted to liberalism and developed fundamentalism.

Fundamentalism rightly understood that the liberal standard led to non-Christian conclusions. But its approach to truth is not essentially

different than the materialist and liberal. Fundamentalism rejected the witness of the natural world when the empirical evidence disagreed with their *interpretation* of Scripture about the age of the earth. Like their liberal opponents, fundamentalists reduced the test of truth to a *single* authority, which boiled down to a faulty *interpretation*. Fundamentalists and liberals, though they accept radically different conclusions about the Bible, both reverted to a common method to determine truth: authority alone. The methodology of the fundamentalist and the methodology of the liberal are one in the same. They both ignore inconvenient evidence which stares them in the face.

The Ultimate Source of the Test for Truth

One objection at this point may be that we have argued for the test for truth from the Bible. The astute reader may ask, "Is it not a self-contradiction to argue for the test for truth from the Bible when the test for truth says it is unbiblical to use the Bible alone as the sole authority to determine a matter?" That is a good question. Have we committed a logical fallacy?

The answer is "no," because of the *ultimate source* for the test of truth *as revealed* in Scripture. We deny that the Bible is the *ultimate* source for the test of truth. The ultimate source for the biblical test of truth is the *Trinitarian nature of God himself*. The test of truth is a reflection of God who is both one and many.

Notice how the test of truth is *assumed* from the opening pages of Scripture. The story of God's judgment on Adam and Eve at the fall is essentially the record of a trial. Noticed the process God used in order to arrive at his judgment:

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The

woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and *I ate*." (Gen. 3:8-13 NIV)

God, of course, knew exactly what happened. Yet God set an example in order to teach his people. God examined *two witnesses*, both of whom confessed their transgression by their own lips. This established the truth of the disobedient act of Adam and Eve and led to the immediate "death sentence" when God banished them from the garden and the tree of life (Gen. 3:22-24).²⁴ Nowhere are we told that God informed Adam that he would be judged by this "due process." This is merely an example of God acting in conformity to his own nature. The test of truth is grounded *ultimately* in the Trinitarian nature of God, not Scripture.

In its most extreme forms fundamentalism tends to suggest that the Bible is the *sole authority* by which man can know any and all truth in God's world. This univocal method is incompatible with the fact that our Trinitarian God created a universe that reflects both his unity and diversity. *Fundamentalism's single-standard view of truth is implicitly Unitarian*. The biblical test of truth, on the other hand, recognizes the Trinitarian implications for our world: God can and does use a diversity of *means* to communicate one *truth*. The testimony of multiple witnesses (many) to know the truth (one) is a reflection of our Trinitarian Lord of the universe.

The Full Christian Worldview

While materialism and liberalism's denial of miracles are un-scientific because they rejected the *evidence* of miracles, as reported by the *eyewitness testimony of many credible witnesses* in Scripture, fundamentalism also became un-scientific. Fundamentalism (now synonymous with young-earth creationism and futurism) refuses to reconcile their biblical interpretation of creation, flood, and prophecy with the observed evidence provided by our physical world.

We have labored throughout this book to show that the Bible, understood on its own terms, refutes *every* tenet of young-earth creationism as well as the associated prophetic futurism. Why are we dedicated to this critique? Fundamentalism represents a disastrous situation. Christians, with the best of intentions, use a myth (global flood) to attack a lie (atheistic Darwinism) and tell the world a half-truth (God created the universe about 6000 years ago). Is it any wonder Christianity has found itself as the tail and not the head of modern culture?

The full Christian worldview can only be re-established by returning to the biblical standard for truth: the *testimony of many witnesses*. Don Stoner offers a baseline guide as Christians progress in their study of God's Word and God's world:

Science and theology are both fallible systems for seeking truth. God's Bible and His universe both supply unerring facts. Our own theories should be built upon the facts from both God's Bible and His creation. Even then, we must allow for the possibility that we might still make mistakes. Perhaps the most important lesson we should learn from this is humility.²⁵

Not only does this approach call for humility. It calls for a renaissance in the Christian's view of modern science as the fruit of biblical Christianity. Before the advent of dispensationalism, Christians widely accepted modern science as a positive blessing and tool to further God's kingdom on earth. Dispensationalism's inherently negative view of creation and culture brought that positive view of our world and cultural development (such as science) to an end.

Science, like theology, fulfills a valuable service within God's kingdom. Conrad Hyers notes a healthy view of the complementary role of modern science and Christianity:

Science and religion are not thereby irrelevant to each other. That would be intolerably schizophrenic. They can mutually enrich and stimulate each other. Religion can caution science about the limitations of its naturalistic bias and remind it that it does not represent the sum total... Science has opened up the vastness and infinite complexity of astronomical space and geological time, a universe far more dramatic and fantastic and marvelous – that is worthy of marvel – than previous peoples had ever imagined. Such a stupendous universe as has now been unfolded before us is not less but more reason to marvel before the Mystery of Mysteries that lies behind and within so prodigious a display of unending forms and changes.²⁶

The details of the scientific case for a universe that is millions and even billions of years old go beyond the purpose of this book. While we admit openly to the reader that we are convinced that the scientific case for a billions-of-years-old universe is overwhelming, we have avoided

making modern science the focus of our presentation. The evidence is widely available, and we are confident that those who examine it objectively, according to God's own standard for truth, will find the answer to the question of age of the earth for themselves. We are also confident this answer will lead to a new appreciation of our great God – the Creator of it all.

The most biblical thing modern Christians can do is accept the credible evidence that stares them in the face, *all of the evidence*. There are two truths which need each other for Christian culture to renew its vigor in our day: (1) The Bible provides the legitimate record of God's miraculous intervention in history, and can be trusted when interpreted properly; and (2) reputable science provides legitimate knowledge about God's magnificent creation and can be trusted when interpreted properly. The God of the Bible is the God of creation.

We believe this mutual friendship between theology and modern science could become the catalyst for a full Christian worldview that will transform our world in the future as it has in the past. The key is following the biblical test for truth. The Bible continues to change the world through those who walk in its light and worship the only wise God it reveals.

CHAPTER 20

THE CASE FOR PROPHECY FULFILLED

This book argues that the promise of Christ's coming found in New Testament prophecy was fulfilled historically in the first century. Our case is for preterism (past fulfillment) in opposition to the common views which place the second coming in our future, i.e., premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism.*

The idea of a past second coming may seem impossible for many modern Christians. Of course, this dogmatic belief will tend to blind Christians to the *evidence* the Bible provides about the fulfillment of prophecy. We have no doubt that some may reject our case without further examination because they believe some human



authority, whether modern or ancient, will not allow for the *possibility* that preterism is true. This approach, however, does not eliminate the biblical evidence. Christians may choose to ignore it, but the Bible will not disappear; sooner or later, Christians must deal directly with the biblical evidence about the *timing* of biblical prophecy.

Historically, the Church has taught that the resurrection of the dead occurs in conjunction with the second coming. We believe the Bible teaches this association. If true, it would mean that a *consistent* preterist view of prophecy places the fulfillment of the resurrection in the first century along with the coming of Christ. Does the Bible teach a preterist view of the second coming and the resurrection? In keeping with God's own standard for truth we outlined in the last chapter, we present the biblical evidence as an assembly of many witnesses for preterism's

* Millennialism refers to the 1000 years in Revelation 20:2, 4-5. *Pre-* and *post-* refers to the view that the second coming of Christ occurs before or after this so-called millennium. *A-* refers to the view that the millennium is figurative.

logical implication: the fulfillment of *all* biblical prophecy, including the resurrection of the dead.

Preliminary Comments

We approach the question of fulfilled prophecy after the example of the Bereans who “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11 NKJV). Conservative Christians live within a Berean heritage that once taught openly that the Bible is the ultimate standard for faith and practice. DeMar voices this noble heritage:

Challenging those who appeal to history to make their case is a valid investigative and apologetic approach. Paul didn’t condemn the Bereans when they wanted to check his claims against the text of Scripture (Acts 17:11). *Ad fontes*, “to the fountain,” that is “to the sources” should be the Christian’s constant rallying cry.¹

Those who *refuse to even consider the possibility* that all biblical prophecy has been fulfilled in the light of what Scripture teaches may *say* they believe the Bible is the final standard for Christian beliefs, but they do not *practice* what they preach. Milton Terry, a strong proponent for the past fulfillment of the second coming, once wrote:

We cannot believe that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has any respect for a tradition of the elders that cannot commend itself by open, manly, convincing argument, but presumes rather to hold its ground by dogmatic assertion and ecclesiastical oppression... God will smite that whited wall of a Protestantism which boasts its encouragement of a free and fearless searching of the Scriptures, and yet dishonors its throne of judgment by imposing stripes on the truth-loving disciple of Jesus, who studies with all diligence to present himself approved unto God and to handle aright the word of truth.²

What follows below is a free and fearless search of what the Bible says about the fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

Before we lay out our case we should address two key misunderstandings that might distract the reader about what the complete fulfillment of biblical prophecy would mean. Some mistakenly assume that:

1. Fulfilled prophecy makes the Bible meaningless to modern Christians.

What is strange about this misunderstanding is that those who foster it do not apply it to the Old Testament. Is the Old Testament now meaningless because Jesus fulfilled the Messianic prophecies? On the contrary, fulfilled prophecy brings a fuller understanding of our Scripture. We now see the ultimate meaning of the Law and prophets because the Messianic prophecies are *fulfilled* in Jesus Christ. Fulfilled prophecy makes the Bible *more meaningful*, not less.

The real issue at hand is audience relevance. The entire Bible comes to us through the historical context of the original audience. This fact does not rule out contemporary application of the Bible; it actually provides the necessary foundation for it. How can we properly apply the Bible to a contemporary context without first understanding what it meant to the original audience? David Chilton gives this explanation of audience relevance applied to Revelation:

If the Book of Revelation is primarily a prophecy to the first-century Church, is it of any value to Christians today? As a matter of fact, that question faces us with regard to every book in the Bible, not just Revelation; for all Scripture was written “to” someone else, and not “to” us... [Chilton then offers one example of application based on historical fulfillment] God’s judgment on Israel for her disobedience can happen to us as well, if we do not persevere in faith and works. If even Israel could be broken off from the covenantal Tree of Life, so can we... The Book of Revelation therefore has continuing lessons for the Church of all ages.³

The very same principles apply to all of biblical prophecy – even if it has been completely fulfilled.

Fulfilled prophecy also gives food for faith because it provides tangible evidence that God keeps all of his promises. Preterism highlights the fact that God did what he said he would do, *when* he said he would. Given the historical fulfillment of the prophetic word, we have every reason to believe that God keeps his covenant promises to his people.

2. Fulfilled prophecy changes radically how God relates to man.

Some claim that fulfilled prophecy means there is no longer any judgment of human life during the new covenant age. Those who foster this notion suggest that God related to man one way under the old covenant (law), and relates to man in a completely *different* way under the new covenant (grace). In other words, God judged man during the Mosaic Age, but no longer judges man during the new covenant era. In this understanding, time (i.e., the events of AD 70) changes how God relates to man. This is, fundamentally, a dualistic or dispensational view of the Bible whether espoused by futurists or preterists.

Universal Salvation?

Those who believe that God's judgment ended, in finality, during the first century suggest that God's salvation is now universal.* They propose a radical change in the principles by which God relates to man once Jesus completed the work of redemption. One "comprehensive grace" advocate writes:

If the eschatological resurrection, not just of the first fruits, but the whole harvest was gathered by the fall of Jerusalem, then Bible students are now challenged to re-think how now God relates to humanity.⁴

This universal salvation view is based on a spiritual dispensationalism:

What was needed was a new world that would bring forth a new man through a new relationship of life and righteousness... We need to see anthropology through the lens of a transformed cosmology. Simply stated, man is changed because his world is changed.⁵

Ironically, this *spiritual* dispensationalism, with its radical break in the spiritual world, parallels the *physical* dispensationalism at the heart of young-earth creationism. Also notice how the radical change in the

* The futurist version of this doctrine is called universalism. Some preterists offer a new version labeled "comprehensive grace" or "pantelism." The end conclusion of all these views is identical: God no longer judges human beings for sin, because all judgment has ended.

world suggested above is echoed by Author James Jordan in his dispensational view of earth's *natural* history:

It may well be that the universe functioned somewhat differently under the angelic administration of the Old Creation, before the change in the world in A.D. 70.⁶

Jordan's comment is an argument against old-earth creationism which suggests that the physical universe operates consistently from the beginning to the present. Notice how both the spiritual and physical "dispensational" views referenced above rely on a *global* or *planetary* rather than *covenantal* interpretation of the biblical world we presented back in Chapters 17 and 18.

The fundamental mistake of universal views of salvation is this dispensational view of the spiritual world *combined with* a global or planetary interpretation of the biblical text. Universalism and young-earth creationism use the same interpretive approach to the seemingly universal statements. *Universalism merely applies a dispensational "global" hermeneutic to salvation.* Universal salvation advocates interpret the universal statements related to Christ's salvation, such as "all" and "every," as *scientific-literal, worldwide statements* much like global-flood and global-futurist advocates demand of similar language in Genesis and prophecy. This reliance on a "global" interpretation of salvation makes it incompatible with a local flood and preterism which both emphasize *covenant context*. The universalist is inconsistent to: (1) accept a flood defined by a *covenant context*, (2) accept fulfillment of prophecy defined by a *covenant context* (preterism), and then (3) apply salvation to a *universal* or *global* context. Consistent universalism requires a global flood in Genesis and a global end in prophecy. "Preterist" universalism appears to be a self-contradiction, the result of mixing covenant eschatology with a "physical universe" view of creation and consummation.

Theological Uniformitarianism

We suggest that it is not enough to merely reject the dispensationalist view of earth history, what we know as young-earth creationism. The consistent laws of our physical universe, ordered by the consistent nature of the Law-Giver himself, implies a matching consistent view of the spiritual world. We might call this view "theological uniformitarianism": the *fundamental* principles of God's covenant relationship with

man have never changed, nor do we have any reason to believe they ever will.

Theological uniformitarianism is based on the fact that the Bible presents one story from Adam and Eve, God's original covenant people living in God's garden, to the redemption of all of God's people who live "in Christ." This unified story of the Bible, from the garden in Genesis to the garden in Revelation, defies every form of dispensationalism, whether futurist or preterist, because dispensationalism assumes two (or more) divine standards which operate in various parts of the Bible or during various time periods.

The Gospel Garden

If the garden scene at the end of the Bible is a pictorial revelation of the gospel, then does it not make sense that the original garden described in Genesis also reveals the gospel of Jesus Christ? The description of the city-garden at the end of the Bible is nothing less than the original garden of Eden *in its fully mature state!* The garden and tree of life imagery introduced in the opening chapters of Genesis appears inside the walls of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:27-22:5).

Some theologians rightly note in passing how the original garden scene is the ideal picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ:

From the creation of the world the grand contest has been who shall be worshipped and served – the Creator or the creature. This was man's trial under the first covenant; and it is that by which every man is still tried, although, thanks be to God! He is not now to stand or fall by his own works. It was to be proved in Eden whether man would seek wisdom and happiness independently of God; and this is precisely the trial to which we are subjected still.⁷

Jesus Christ is the last Adam who succeeded where the first Adam failed. His work can never be undone, and believers will always remain in God's garden as they remain in Christ (John 15:1-11; 1 John 2:3-6).

The most obvious (and perhaps only) difference between the original garden and the city-garden in Revelation 21-22 is the fact that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil no longer exists at the end of the story. The reason it has been removed from the garden-city is because faithful believers have God's laws "in their minds" and "on their hearts" (Heb. 8:10; 10:16). God's people have no more need for addi-

tional knowledge of good and evil for they have “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16).

Consider the gospel connection at heart of the creation story. Adam was created to enjoy *fellowship* with God in the context of God’s original “very good” creation. Jesus and the apostles promised *friendship* and *fellowship* with God to those who believed (John 15:14-15; James 2:23; 1 John 1:3). In other words, Christ redeemed his people to the same end goal of Adam and Eve’s *original creation*. Universal views of salvation claim that all human beings are redeemed *whether they know it or not*. Yet how can one be a friend to someone they do not know? How can one have fellowship with God without knowing it? *Any concept of redemption that denies tangible, two-way fellowship between God and man violates the biblical story of creation, fall, and redemption*. Their end is not like their beginning.

Prophecy is centered in redemption, and redemption is about the *restoration* of the original order of covenant fellowship between God and man. *The gospel of Jesus Christ is the gospel preached to Adam in the garden*.⁸ Notice the parallel between these passages:

It is for *freedom* that Christ has set us free... (Gal. 5:1 NIV)

Where is the first mention of God’s gift of freedom in the Bible?

You are *free* to eat from any tree in the garden... (Gen. 2:16 NIV)

The gospel of Jesus Christ returns all those “in Christ” to the state of innocence Adam and Eve experienced in the garden; to the *freedom* they enjoyed before the fall and ensuing bondage to sin and death. The gospel *redeems* what was lost at the fall. God breathed into Adam’s nostrils and he became a living being (Gen. 2:7). After his resurrection, Jesus the divine Son breathed on his disciples giving them the breath of life Adam lost (John 20:22) because of “the death.”

There are more biblical reasons to see the gospel in the original garden. Jesus based his teaching regarding marriage *upon the original created order* in the garden (Matt. 19:3-8)! Paul also relied upon the *pre-fall* condition in his gospel teaching on marriage (Eph. 5:31-32). If Jesus and Paul taught the *created order*, then the gospel existed in the garden. James used the temptation in the garden as the archetype of *gospel* life (James 1:12-16). The original garden is where the gospel of Jesus Christ

begins; this is why the garden in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22) is wholly related to salvation. Jesus is the tree of life from the beginning of the Bible to the end, with the cross (tree) at the center.⁹

Covenant Terms

As we showed in Chapter 12 biological death and evil existed before the fall, and therefore exists in our world after redemption is complete. We simply press the issue consistently. The same is true of God's *covenant terms* for relationship. *The terms of covenant life were part of the original created order.* Adam was created free in the garden, yet he was called to live by God's terms in order to maintain the free gift of covenant life. God gave terms of his covenant relationship with man *before* the fall and therefore, covenant terms exist necessarily *after* redemption is complete.

Creation teaches us that *life* and *freedom* are not opposed to *law*.¹⁰ Redemption is no different. Jesus freed his people by giving them true life ("the life" – John 11:25) *and* he calls his people to live by God's new covenant terms as demonstrated throughout the New Testament (John 15:1-14). But this is not an entirely new development in the New Testament. We see the same *gospel pattern* all through the Old Testament. God first called Abraham from his old life (Gen. 12:1-4) and made a covenant with him (Gen. 15-17). *Then* Abraham obeyed God's commandments, laws, and statutes (Gen. 26:5). The same pattern is repeated in the days of Moses. The Ten Commandments begin with:

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt,
out of the land of slavery. (Ex. 20:2 NIV)

God gave Israel *freedom* first, *then* the terms of his covenant with them at Sinai. Grace first, then obedience. It has always been this way, and the consistency of the biblical story shows that God's redeemed people in history will always live within the terms of God's covenant.

The gospel proclaims the abiding relevance of God's *covenant* terms in relationship with God at the very conclusion of our Bible:

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy
of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will
add to him the plagues described in this book. And if
anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy,
God will take away from him his share in the tree of life

and in the holy city, which are described in this book.
(Rev. 22:18-19 NIV)

This is merely an echo of the first chapters of the Bible. *John warns the disobedient of eviction from God's garden.* The context of John's statement is the new covenant; he is describing the holy city that comes down from heaven. Yet the image John uses of "adding to" or "taking away" from the words of the book is covenantal language drawn from places like Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32. Just as it was possible to break the Mosaic covenant by disobedience, so John shows it is possible to break Christ's covenant by disobedience. One might say that the Mosaic covenant gives the perfect shadow of Christ's covenant (Heb. 10:1).

John wrote similar warnings to the churches in Revelation. John delivers Jesus' warning to God's people in the Ephesian church by writing that if they did not repent Jesus "will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place" (Rev. 2:5 NIV). Realize that the lampstand's place was in God's temple. Jesus warned that he would remove all those who fall away from the faith. In other words, like the original garden-temple, God would drive all those who broke covenant with God from the holy place. John delivers another *gospel* warning to the church at Sardis in Revelation 3:5. Even Paul taught a *gospel* that came with a *warning* in Romans 11:20-22.

The New Covenant "One Sin" Warning of Jesus

Covenant terms in the garden before the fall *prove the abiding relevance of God's judgment*, both positive and negative. As Jesus said,

Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age *or in the age to come*.
(Matt. 12:32 NIV)

Jesus' statement makes perfect sense within the historical context. Many who spoke against the Son of Man and crucified the Lord of Glory later repented of that act *and were forgiven*. Those who resisted the Holy Spirit were not (Acts 7:51). Jesus said this would apply in "the age to come" as surely as it applied during the last days of the old covenant age.

But notice how Jesus' statement regarding the *one sin* that would not be forgiven parallels God's original statement to Adam. There was only *one sin* which God told Adam would result in death. Only *one* thing would not be forgiven: eating fruit from the forbidden tree.¹¹ Likewise,

Jesus affirmed that the one act that guarantees death, in that age or the age to come, was rejection of the Holy Spirit's work.

Forgiveness is limited, like everything else in the Bible, to a covenant context – only those who dwell in the new covenant world receive forgiveness. God's judgment *continues* after redemption is complete. God the gardener (Gen. 2:8) tends his garden (Rev. 22:14-15).¹² The key is to recognize that the promise of judgment for incorrigible disobedience was part of the original "very good" creation God made.

Just as Moses warned of physical death for apostasy and unbelief, so Jesus warned of the "second death" for those who reject the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:28-29, cf. Matt. 12:32; Rev. 2:11; 20:14) and break the covenant of peace. The principle is no different than God's original command to Adam. Could John make this any plainer?

Dear friends, I am not writing you a new [*kainos*] command but an old one, which you have had *since the beginning*. This *old command* is the message you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new [*kainos*] command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the *true light is already shining*. (1 John 2:7-8 NIV)

John says that the new command (the gospel) is *the same one they had "since the beginning"*. It is not a new command (John does not use *neos*). It is a "made-new" (*kainos*) command due to the arrival of Jesus Christ in history. Human beings will always find covenant relationship to God by grace through living faith in Jesus Christ unto obedience. This was the way Adam was originally created to live. The principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ are uniform; like the laws of the universe they do not change, for God does not change. The fulfillment of all biblical prophecy illuminates once and for all the eternal covenant (singular) of God (Mal. 3:1; Heb. 13:20).¹³

The Just Shall Live By Faith

Those who deny faith is necessary in receiving God's salvation deny the substance of all Scripture *including the original created order*. All of Scripture is covenantal because God is a covenant-making God *even before the fall*. The Adamic covenant is nothing less than Jesus Christ's covenant of grace in seed form for Adam never *earned* his way into life in the first place, nor did he *earn* the blessings of the original garden. God required no fee to eat freely of the garden. God required no bride-

price in exchange for Eve. God created Adam by sheer grace to live by faith in God's word. Covenant grace began at creation.¹⁴ God made the original creation that way because he desires for man to relate to him through faith. *God's people have always lived by faith* (Heb. 11:1-40). Even Adam was called to live by faith in God's Word unto obedience.

We suggest that covenant creation is complementary to covenant eschatology at a fundamental *gospel* level. Covenant eschatology pushes forward our understanding of the *meaning* of the consummation in Revelation 21-22, garden imagery and all, as an apocalyptic unveiling of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Covenant creation accomplishes the same feat in the other direction. Covenant creation pushes back our understanding of the *meaning* of the creation in Genesis 1-3, garden imagery and all, as an apocalyptic unveiling of the gospel of Jesus Christ. A covenant creation view of Genesis 1-3 is symmetrical and perfectly balanced with a covenant eschatology view of Revelation 21-22.

We will argue a biblical case in the pages to come that the judgment is past, as the prophecies of judgment and resurrection relate to a *covenant* world. Yet the biblical background of the original *covenant* creation order must be kept in mind. God promised judgment to Adam for disobedience *before* the fall, and so we know God's judgment continues *after* redemption is complete. God the gardener tends his garden. In fact, we can understand God's judgments today by looking at the patterns of God's many acts of judgment in the past, for God does not change (Mal 3:6; James 1:17).¹⁵

The Coming of Christ Fulfilled

Witness 1: Jesus said his *parousia* (coming) would take place before that generation passed away.

Chapters 1 and 2 developed a systematic, chronological overview of what Jesus and the apostles said about the coming of the Son of Man. We will sum up all that evidence by pointing out what Jesus said in the Olivet Discourse:

For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming [*parousia*] of the Son of Man... I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. (Matt. 24:27, 34 NIV)

The Greek word for “coming,” *parousia*, refers to what Christians have historically called the second coming. The word *parousia* occurs in Matthew 24 *before* Jesus made the statement that all the things of which he spoke, at least up until that point, would come to pass within one generation. This agrees with what James promised a few years later:

You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming [*parousia*] is near. (James 5:8 NIV)

James taught the coming of Christ was *near*, not thousands of years away. We could give many more New Testament examples of the promise of the *parousia*, each of which conform to the *timing* Jesus promised in the Olivet Discourse (see 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1; 2:8; 2 Pet. 3:4; 3:12; 1 John 2:28).

Our presentation returns to where we began in Chapter 1. Jesus told Peter that when he was old, he would die as a martyr (John 21:18-19). He also said that John the beloved disciple would remain alive until he came (John 21:22-23). This gives us a clear time-frame in which to expect the coming of Christ, between the deaths of Peter and John. Peter died before AD 70. John lived beyond AD 70. Jesus’ promise was fulfilled exactly as he predicted. The coming (*parousia*) of Christ took place in the first century. It is in our past, not our future.

Witness 2: The two redemptive comings of Christ are prefigured by the two comings of Moses.

The Bible makes a connection between Moses and Jesus at many points. Moses is God’s prophet. Jesus is a prophet *like* Moses (Deut. 18:15, cf. Acts 3:22-23; 7:37). Moses is the mediator of the old covenant. Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant (Heb. 8:6; 9:19-28). Moses led God’s people out of Egyptian bondage. Jesus leads God’s people out of what Egypt symbolized in the Old Testament, the *bondage* to sin and death. Moses gave God’s people the Law on tablets of stone (Ex. 34). Jesus writes God’s holy Law on the minds and hearts of God’s people (Heb.8:10 cf. Jer. 31:33).¹⁶ The shadow of Moses follows the perfect outline of the body which is Christ.

Christians do not often think to examine the life of Moses for more *parallels* to the life and work of Jesus Christ. The life of Moses foreshadows the life of Jesus. The most obvious relates to their childhood experience. Just as Pharaoh tried to kill Moses by killing all of the Hebrew

male children (Ex. 1-2), Herod tried to kill Jesus by killing all of the male children in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16-17). The similarity of these historical events is providential. Those who found out about the childhood of Jesus would make the immediate association to the life of Moses. Jesus was *like* Moses. He is the Prophet Moses told the people would come.

But there are more overlooked similarities between the lives of Moses and Jesus. There are actually *two comings* in the life of Moses. After Moses grew up he came to the aid of one of his Hebrew brothers by killing the Egyptian who abused him (Ex. 2:11-13). This event in the life of Moses is a picture of what Jesus did when he grew up. Jesus defeated death (which abused God's people since they were in bondage to sin and death) through his crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. Notice also that their brethren rejected both Moses and Jesus when they first appeared (Ex. 2:14; John 1:11). After Moses killed the Egyptian he disappeared from the community of God's people (Ex. 2:15). Jesus also disappeared from the community of God's people after the crucifixion and resurrection (Acts 1:9).

When did Moses return a second time to God's people? *The Bible says he returned 40 years later.* Moses was 40 years old when he left Egypt (Acts 7:23) and 80 years old when he encountered the burning bush (Acts 7:30) and returned to stand before Pharaoh (Ex. 7:7). The two comings of Moses, like the two comings of Christ, were separated by 40 years!

The parallels are unmistakable. Just as Moses appeared a second time, 40 years after he disappeared, in order to complete the salvation of God's people from Egypt, so Jesus appeared a second time, 40 years after he disappeared, in order to finish the salvation of God's people (Heb. 9:28). The second coming of Christ is not only promised to occur within one generation (40 years) of the Olivet Discourse, it is also pre-figured in the life of Moses whose two comings are separated by 40 years (one generation). Exodus teaches preterism in types and shadows!

The Bible provides *two witnesses* to the fact that the second coming took place 40 years after the ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ: (1) the time statements teach the Lord's coming would be within one generation (Matt. 24:34), and (2) the life of Moses foreshadows the fact that Jesus would appear a second time after 40 years. The second coming of Christ took place in association with the destruction of Judea, Jerusalem, and the temple in AD 70 as both the Old and New Testaments declare.

The Judgment Fulfilled

Witness 3: The judgment occurs at Christ's coming.

Both Church history and the Bible teach that the judgment occurs at the coming of Christ. Notice the connection in this passage we referenced back in Chapter 1:

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and *then* he will reward each person according to what he has done. I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." (Matt. 16:27-28 NIV)

What many miss about the day of judgment in AD 70 is that it refers to a *covenant context*. AD 70 fulfilled the day of judgment, because it was *Israel's* day of judgment when the kingdom was taken from Israel after the flesh and given to another people who bore the fruits God desired, the Israel of God (Matt. 21:40-43; Mark 12:9; Luke 20:15-16 c.f. Gal. 6:16). That took place when the owner of the vineyard (God the gardener) returned to destroy those wicked servants at the coming of the divine Son, Jesus Christ.¹⁷

Another passage that associates the coming of the Lord and the judgment is found in Revelation. John writes of things which "must soon take place":

We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. *The time has come* for judging the dead. (Rev. 11:17-18 NIV)

Revelation 11 completes the first half of the book, the bridegroom portion. This text refers to the end which corresponds with the historical events surrounding AD 70. John repeats this association between the coming and the judgment at the end of the second half of Revelation, the bride portion, by writing:

Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and *I will give to everyone according to what he has done*. (Rev. 22:12 NIV)

We can come to no other conclusion than the judgment promised in the New Testament was fulfilled in the first century with the coming of Christ.

The Lord's Descent and the Trumpet Fulfilled

Witness 4: The Lord's descent and trumpet call relate to the full manifestation of the new covenant nation.

The *covenant context* of New Testament prophecy can be seen in another famous prophetic passage. Notice what Paul says about the Lord's coming:

For this we say unto you *by the word of the Lord*... For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. (1 Thess. 4:15-16 KJV)

Paul claims his teaching comes from what Jesus taught. But notice the elements in the passage: the Lord will descend, with the voice of the archangel, and a trumpet call. Paul draws his teaching from the Olivet Discourse where Jesus spoke about his coming, angels, and “a loud trumpet call” (Matt. 24:30-31).

Futurists place 1 Thess. 4:15-16 at the end of the Church age or at the end of history because that is where they place the coming of Christ. However, all of the elements used by Jesus and Paul are drawn from a very important event in the Old Testament. The biblical source of these elements of the Lord descending and the loud trumpet do not mark an end so much as they mark a *new beginning*. All of these elements are prominent at Mount Sinai when God gave the Law to the people through Moses:

And the LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow... Only when *the ram's horn sounds a long blast* may they go up to the mountain...” On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a *very loud trumpet blast*. Everyone in the camp trembled... Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because *the LORD descended* on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered

him. *The LORD descended* to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. (Ex. 19:10, 13, 16-20 NIV)

The giving of the Law marked a new beginning. It marked *the complete manifestation of Israel as an independent nation*. God's people had "the covenant" before this. Covenant life ("the life") and covenant death ("the death") go back to Adam. Circumcision comes from the days of Abraham, yet Sinai was the *full revelation* of the old covenant and formed Israel as a new nation.

Those who understood Jesus and Paul in the context of the Old Testament would make the association back to Sinai. The Lord descended and the blast of the trumpet announced God's Word to the people. This suggests a *covenant context* for 1 Thessalonians 4. The descent of the Lord, the voice of the archangel, and the loud trumpet call mark a new beginning for God's people, who had come to a *new* holy mountain:

But you have come to Mount Zion. (Heb. 12:22 NIV)

The early Christians were receiving the final manifestation of God's covenant. Like Israel gathered at Sinai, they awaited the trumpet call of God. They awaited the Lord to descend. They awaited the final manifestation of the Law from the new Moses. 1 Thess. 4 references no "rapture," past or future; Christians were expecting to be *gathered into a made-new nation here on earth*, an eternal kingdom formed by the glory of God.

It is only in this context of Israel's history that we can truly understand the significance of John's climactic statement at the end of Revelation 11 (which completes the bridegroom portion). Note John's connections to Sinai in Exodus 19 and 24:

The seventh angel sounded his *trumpet*, and there were *loud voices in heaven*, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever"... Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm. (Rev. 11:15, 19 NIV)

John provides a covenant echo of the record of what happened when Israel left Egypt and entered into covenant with God at the foot

of Mount Sinai: lightning, thunder and an earthquake.¹⁸ John also adds reference to a great hailstorm (which does not appear in the account of Sinai). Could this be a prophetic reference to the terrible hailstorm Josephus recorded during the initial assault on Jerusalem and the Temple? Or perhaps the “great hailstorm” is an allusion to the *victory* God gave to Joshua over the Canaanite kings (Josh. 10:11).

Either way, the giving of the Law at Sinai provides another significant parallel between Moses and Christ:

When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud. To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. *Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.* (Ex. 24:15-18 NIV)

Moses ascended in the glory cloud, just like Jesus ascended in a cloud in Acts. 1:9. Moses stayed on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights, symbolic of the 40 years between Christ’s ascension and return. This also parallels the 40 days and 40 nights that the rain fell out of the clouds which surrounded the ark. Noah was separated from the old world by this event, and when Noah came out of the ark, there was a new beginning for a new people of God.¹⁹

When Moses descended he brought the full old covenant Law to the people, as summarized by the Ten Commandments. The Lord’s descent with the shout of the archangel and the loud trumpet call of God marked a new beginning for a new people of God. Christians were God’s holy people before AD 70 (1 Peter 1:9-10), just as the Hebrews were a recognizable people in Egypt (Ex. 5:1), but Christians became an *independent* people forever at the coming of Christ. The destruction of Jerusalem announced the birth of a new nation.

The proper biblical context of the coming of the Lord demonstrates the *covenant context* of New Testament prophecy. Prophecy relates to the end of a covenant era or age and the final manifestation of the new covenant between God and his people. If the new covenant is revealed today, then the Lord’s descent and the blast of the trumpet were fulfilled in AD 70.

The Resurrection Fulfilled

Witness 5: The resurrection is a promise to old covenant Israel.

The Old Testament contains the promise of resurrection. Both Ezekiel 37-38 and Daniel 12 give prophecies to old covenant Israel of a coming resurrection. We can also demonstrate this fact directly from the New Testament. The Jews had an expectation of the resurrection as shown by what Martha said to Jesus:

Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." (John 11:24 NIV)

Martha did not get this teaching from the New Testament; her belief in the coming resurrection even preceded the ministry of Christ, long before any New Testament books were written! Her belief in resurrection had its origins in the old covenant promises.

That demonstrates that the resurrection is past, for the old covenant *has passed away*. Paul made it absolutely clear that not one of God's promises could fail (Rom. 9:6). How is it possible, then, to believe that the old covenant has ended, but some of the promises it contained *remain unfulfilled*? The idea that the resurrection remains in our future implies that God's old covenant resurrection promise to Israel (Ez. 27-38; Dan. 12) *failed*. If the resurrection remains in our future, then the old covenant passed away without some of its promises coming to pass. The resurrection is a promise to old covenant Israel. This is a strong indication that the resurrection is in our past, not in our future.

Witness 6: Jesus is the (first) resurrection.

In Chapter 12 we showed how the curse upon Adam was not related to biological death since biological death existed in God's creation before man sinned. Rather, the curse was related to spiritual death caused by Adam's sin; it is "the death" defined by a broken covenant relationship between God and man. Spiritual death is living life apart from God. This may be an unfamiliar concept to modern Christians, but Augustine taught the same thing about Adam's *mortal* condition by creation:

It is difficult to explain how man was created immortal and at the same time in company with the other living creatures was given for food the seed-bearing plant, the fruit tree, and the green crops. If it was by sin that he was

made mortal, surely before sinning he did not need such food since his body could not corrupt for lack of it.²⁰

He was mortal therefore by the constitution of his natural body, and he was immortal by the gift of his Creator. For if it was a natural body he had, it was certainly mortal because it was able to die, at the same time immortal by reason of the fact that it was able not to die.²¹

Augustine states that Adam was created originally with a natural body just like our human bodies today. Following his reasoning, the new life that Jesus came to bring (John 10:10) was not physical, but spiritual; Jesus restores the broken relationship between God and man. That shows that resurrection is *salvation*. Jesus claimed to be the resurrection:

Jesus said to her, “*I am the resurrection and the life*. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and *whoever lives and believes in me will never die*. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26 NIV)

Though few modern Christians consciously think of their salvation as resurrection from the dead, multitudes sing this rich truth every Christmas. Consider a portion of “Hark the Herald Angels Sing”:

Born that man no more may die /
Born to raise the sons of earth /
Born to give them second birth.

Charles Wesley makes a clear association between resurrection (“raise the sons of earth”) and salvation (“give them second birth”). If salvation has come to earth, then so too has the resurrection. Jesus said it plainly:

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; *he has crossed over from death to life* [resurrection]. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and *has now come* when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. (John 5:24-25 NIV)

Jesus refers to those who were dead in “trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). Those who hear his voice and believe in him become a “new cre-

ation” (2 Cor. 5:17-18), a “new man” (Col. 3:10), *through the resurrection* which began during his ministry. Jesus is the resurrection. His life in us gives us eternal life (John 4:13-14). The resurrection has come; it is not in our future.

Witness 7: Daniel tells us exactly when the resurrection will take place

Theologians have long made a connection between Daniel’s book of prophecy and Revelation. This means that if it can be proved that Revelation was fulfilled in the first century, culminating with the destruction of Jerusalem, then we have *prima facie* evidence that Daniel is fulfilled historically at the same time. Since Daniel speaks of the resurrection, this alone would place the resurrection in our distant past.

Daniel 12 provides a key prophecy about the resurrection:

At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. (Dan. 12:1-3 NIV)

Jesus also spoke of “a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then” in his Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:21; Mark 13:19; Luke 21:23). This connects Daniel’s prophecy to the Olivet Discourse which was fulfilled by AD 70.

Daniel 12:2 has been applied historically by Christians to a future resurrection of physical bodies at the end of the world. Recent scholarship shows that Daniel’s resurrection prophecy was fulfilled in the first century. James Jordan writes:

Verse 2 [of Daniel 12] is often cited as proof that there was a belief in the resurrection of the body in the Old Testament times. In fact, though, this verse does not teach that... [T]he resurrection here is a national resurrection like the one portrayed in Ezekiel 37... The resurrection of verse 2 [of Daniel 12] seems to connect to the evangelistic

and teaching ministry spoken of in verse 3; thus, it is some kind of historical resurrection that is spoken of, a resurrectional event in this world, in our history.²²

The New Testament provides another link to Daniel 12. Paul characterizes Christians in his day as “shining stars” by saying:

Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, *in which you shine like stars in the universe.* (Phil. 2:14-15 NIV)

As we saw in Chapter 17, Paul is not talking about inter-galactic cosmic radiation. His statement is covenantal – related to the moral world of man. Paul’s language comes directly from Daniel 12. He applies it to the experience of Christians *in his day*. This is a very strong indicator that Daniel 12 (resurrection and all) was fulfilled in the first century.

We do not have to wonder about the timing of the fulfillment of the resurrection promised in Daniel 12. Daniel is told exactly when the resurrection takes place:

One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “*How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?*” The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, “It will be for a time, times and half a time. *When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.*” (Dan. 12:6-7 NIV)

Daniel is told, with an oath, that “all these things” would be accomplished “when the power of the holy people has been finally broken.” Daniel refers to the old covenant nation of Israel. They were the holy people during Daniel’s day. Their power, as the sole path to covenant relationship with God, ended in the first century. That is when the resurrection took place. Daniel tells us exactly when the resurrection takes place, and it is not in our future.

Witness 8: Paul taught the resurrection was “about to be.”

The early Christians experienced resurrection as they believed in the name of Jesus Christ. At the same time, the New Testament teaches clearly that the early believers continued to expect *the* resurrection in their future. It is this resurrection that modern Christians place in our future, along with the second coming.

Many do not realize that the early Christians expected the resurrection to take place in the same time-frame as the coming of Christ and passing away of the “heaven and earth” of the old covenant system. The timing of the resurrection is clear if we simply pay attention to the time statements. As Author Gary DeMar points out,

The solution in determining when certain prophetic events will take place is the presence of time indicators.²³

Paul gives a *time indicator* in reference to the resurrection of the dead:

And I confess this to thee, that, according to the way that they call a sect, so serve I the God of the fathers, believing all things that in the law and the prophets have been written, having hope toward God, which they themselves also wait for, [that] *there is about to be a rising again of the dead, both of righteous and unrighteous...* and he reasoning concerning righteousness, and temperance, and the judgment that is *about to be*. (Acts 24:14-15, 25 YLT)

We have cited a literal translation (Young’s Literal Translation) because most modern translations omit an important Greek word, *mello*, found in both v. 15 and v. 25. *Mello* appears in numerous other places in the New Testament and is generally translated as “about to be” or “soon to come”²⁴ Notice in the above passage that Luke quotes Paul’s use of *mello* and then uses it himself as well. They *both* understood the resurrection to come was “about to be,” nearly 2000 years ago. Every literal English translation provides the accurate rendering which makes the time-statements absolutely clear.

Paul made the same time-statement when he taught of the coming resurrection to the men of Athens:

[B]ecause He did set a day in which *He is about to judge the world* in righteousness, by a man whom He did ordain, having given assurance to all, having raised him out of the dead. (Acts 17:31 YLT)

Another example can be found in the very last portion of Paul's writings:

I do fully testify, then, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ,
who is about to judge living and dead at his manifestation
and his reign... (2 Tim. 4:1 YLT)

Bad translations, stemming from the pervasive futurist bias of translators, conceal Paul's clear teaching.²⁵ He taught that the resurrection and judgment were "about to" take place in his day. The (second) resurrection took place when Paul said it would. It is in our past, not in our future.

The Millennium Fulfilled

Witness 9: The millennium begins at the binding of Satan during the ministry of Christ.

The doctrine of the resurrection is directly related to the millennium of Revelation 20, perhaps the most difficult passage to interpret in our entire Bible. The millennium references two distinct resurrections. The first begins when the millennium opens and the second takes place at the end of the millennium (Rev. 20:4-5). But notice how John opens:

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. (Rev. 20:1-3 NIV)

What puzzles many Christians is the identity of the angel John references. We know that the book's main subject is Jesus Christ which means our first inclination should be Jesus. Who else can bind Satan?

The key to the millennium is found in what John has already told us. In his gospel, he records a specific claim Jesus made:

No one has ever gone into heaven *except the one who came from heaven*—the Son of Man. (John 3:13 NIV)

That shows John's "angel coming down out of heaven" is none other than Jesus Christ, and it also demonstrates that he refers to the *first* com-

ing. Jesus was the one from heaven *during his ministry*. But does the ministry of Christ fit the vision of John? Was Satan bound during the ministry of Jesus? Yes. The proof is in Christ's power to cast out demons:

And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but *has an end*. No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, *unless he first binds the strong man*. And then he will plunder his house. (Mark 3:26-27 NKJV)

Jesus' ability to cast out demons was something unique in the Bible to that point. The Old Testament prophets did many miracles, including raising the dead. But *no one* in covenant history had power over demons. (The closest example was David's musical talent which could *sooth* the distressing spirit indwelling Saul; see 1 Sam. 16:14-23). Jesus' power to cast out demons befuddled the Pharisees and teachers of the Law. They had never seen nor heard of such power. Everyone *observed* this remarkable development, and to blunt the implications of Jesus' authority over demons they claimed he cast out demons by the power of Beelzebub, prince of demons (Matt. 12:24-30). Jesus responded by saying that a kingdom divided against itself could not stand. He then said that in order to rob the strong man's house, one must first bind the strong man. Jesus came into history to plunder the strong man's house. The book of Acts is the story of the nations converting to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This was only possible because *Jesus, during his ministry, bound the strong man (Satan)*.

The millennium began with the binding of Satan which occurred during the ministry of Christ. The proof is the casting out of demons. The binding of Satan cleared the way for the gospel to go to every nation, tribe, people, and tongue during the first century (Rev. 7:9). Jesus plundered Satan's house from the time of his resurrection and ascension. Once the gospel was introduced, Satan's power to deceive the nations ended until the end of the millennium.

Witness 10: The loosing of Satan at the end of the millennium is the great apostasy Jesus promised would come at the end of the last days.

Jesus promised that a great apostasy would arise in the last days (Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22; Luke 18:8). As noted in Chapter 4 the writers

of the New Testament dealt with a great apostasy in the last few years before the events of AD 70.

Some suggest that Satan could not have been bound during the first century because of various references to the devil prowling about. The main proof-text offered comes from Peter's first epistle:

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil *prowls around* like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.
(1 Pet. 5:8 NIV)

How can this be possible if Jesus bound Satan during his ministry (see also Eph. 4:27 and Acts 20:29-30)? The biblical answer is that Satan is *loosed* at the end of the millennium.

When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. (Rev. 20:7-8 NIV)

Every New Testament reference to an active Satan was written toward the very end of the New Testament. Both 1 Peter and Ephesians were written late; scholars date the writing of 1 Peter and Ephesians as late as A.D. 62-63. Revelation also gives a late reference to an active Satan:

Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. (Rev. 2:10 NIV)

A chronological examination of these texts confirms that they refer, contextually, to the time when Satan was released for a "short time." *The loosing of Satan at the end of the millennium is concurrent to the great apostasy Jesus promised in the Olivet Discourse.*

The three traditional views of the millennium (pre-, post-, and a-millennialism) all place the end of the millennium (and the resurrection that Paul and the early church taught was "about to be") into our future because they are all variations of futurism. This is particularly significant for the postmillennial system. Postmillennialism generally teaches the Church age is equivalent to the millennium. But notice the dilemma the postmillennialist faces:

When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will *go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth*—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. (Rev. 20:7-8 NIV)

Postmillennialists teach that their system is an *optimistic* view of the victory of the Church in history, in contrast to amillennialism and premillennialism. Yet they view this terrible ending of the millennium in our future! Gary North, a vocal postmillennialist, points out the logical end of the postmillennial view of history:

The devil will be loosed for a little season at the end of time, meaning his power over the nations returns to him in full strength (Rev. 20:3).²⁶

If the end of the millennium remains in our future, and if the millennium ends with Satan's power over the nations restored, how can the postmillennialist honestly proclaim victory *in history* for the Church? Any victory the Church enjoys through gospel growth and discipleship is "predestined" to be fleeting and temporary. According to postmillennialism, the end of the millennium looms in our future. Postmillennialism's futurism leads directly to a *pessimistic* view of what happens at the end of history. Postmillennialism is simply another defeatist view of the future, for its advocates believe in the *eventual defeat of the gospel at the end of the Millennium*. What is more, this final apostasy must be a *global* anti-Christ movement because the Church is now truly *global*. In the postmillennial "vision," God's enemies supposedly completely surround God's people at some point in our future:

They marched across the breadth of the earth [*ge*] and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. (Rev. 20:9 NIV)

The only way God's people gain victory, within the postmillennial view, is God's direct intervention to end history. Ironically, postmillennialism's ending resembles exactly what premillennialism teaches.

Only a *consistent* preterist view of prophecy, which sees the millennium spanning the 40 years between the ministry of Christ and the coming of Christ, can offer a biblically grounded, truly optimistic view of history. The future looks bright for Christianity because of the mil-

lennium's complete fulfillment. Christians can be optimistic about the future *only* if preterism is true.

Witness 11: The millennium is a life-span – one generation – which covers the period between the ministry of Christ and AD 70.

The greatest objection to a first-century millennium is that it seems impossible to fit a 1000 years into the 40 years between the ascension and coming of Christ. The reference to a 1000-year period in Revelation 20, however, is linked to 2 Peter 3. Both passages reference 1000 years (2 Pet 3:8; Rev. 20:4-5). Both passages reference a fiery judgment *when the thousand years are over* (2 Peter 3:7, 10; Rev. 20:9). Peter mentions a new heaven and new earth in 2 Peter 3, and John continues with a discussion of the new heavens and the new earth in Revelation 21-22. These parallels show the millennium *to be the time period between the two comings of Christ*. As Chilton puts it:

St. John's image for the gathered people of God combines Moses' **camp of the saints** with David and Solomon's **beloved City**. This City is the New Jerusalem, described in detail in 21:9-22:5. The significance of this should not be missed: *The City exists during the Millennium* (i.e. the period between the First and Second Advents of Christ) [emphasis ours].²⁷

The long life-spans of Isaiah 65:20 are promised for those who live in the new heavens and new earth. Many suggest that the millennium must be a long period of time, generations upon generations. But notice that John is clearly not talking about generations (plural) but *one specific* generation:

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded *for their witness to Jesus* and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And *they lived* and reigned with Christ *for a thousand years*. (Rev. 20:4 NKJV)

John referenced those who suffered during the great tribulation. "*They lived... for a thousand years*" because they had eternal life by faith even

though they experienced physical death. There is nothing in the text to suggest John speaks of generations and generations into the distant future.

In Chapter 15 we showed the connections between the literary style in early Genesis and Revelation. In Chapter 16 we showed how the long life-spans mark covenant life related to the offspring of Eve, the mother of all the living. The thousand years is a life-span signifying eternal life. John's millennium (the fulfillment of Isaiah 65:20) is ultimately rooted in the apocalyptic life-spans in early Genesis (as so many other things we find in Revelation). The patriarchs, blessed as they were to live in covenant with God, *never* lived a 1000 years. The comparison to the millennium can hardly be missed. All those who receive the final redemption from the Adamic curse, "the death," live *symbolically* for 1000 years.

Just as the apocalyptic life-spans in Genesis reference the single lives of individual patriarchs, so it is with the millennial life-span. The millennium references one generation (40 years). Though many have seen that the 1000 years is a symbolic number, they have not seen the *source* of the millennium in the long life-spans referenced in early Genesis and Isaiah 65:20. The millennium is surely symbolic, but it is important to recognize what John's symbolism references – the eternal life the first Christians received through faith in Jesus Christ. If this is correct, then John's millennium can *only* be applied to the 40 years of that generation. *To apply it to a literal thousand years (or on-going thousands of years) is to miss John's point altogether.* If the source of the millennium is the symbolic long life-spans recorded in the early chapters of Genesis, then the millennium spans the historical time period between AD 30 and AD 70. The fiery judgment at the end of the millennium is the same fiery judgment referenced in 2 Peter 3:7, 10. The end of the millennium (and the second resurrection) corresponds to what happened in AD 70.

We should add one additional point here. A fulfilled view of the millennium has tremendous implications for the proper understanding of the original creation. Consider these passages from author Don Preston:

In Matthew 23:34-36, Jesus said judgment on the Jews would come in that generation. It was to be a judgment so comprehensive it would encompass all the martyrs *all the way back to creation* (23:35) [emphasis ours]²⁸

Notice that in Revelation 6:12-17 the response to the prayer of the martyrs was the promise that the Great Day

of God was coming. *The creation would be destroyed*, and the wicked would “run for the hills.” To put it another way, the martyrs would be vindicated at the Great Day of the Lord, *when heaven and earth would pass away* [emphasis ours].²⁹

[S]ince the Great Day of the Lord was to occur at *the time of the destruction of creation*, at the judgment of Babylon [Jerusalem], and since *creation was to be destroyed at the end of the millennium*, then the vindication of the martyrs, in the judgment of Babylon [Jerusalem], was to occur at the end of the millennium [emphasis ours].³⁰

These are remarkable statements. If (1) the creation goes all the way back to the beginning in Genesis (as noted in the first comment), and (2) the creation was to be destroyed “when heaven and earth would pass away” (as noted in the second comment), and (3) the creation was to be destroyed at the end of the millennium (as noted in the third comment), then a fulfilled millennium presents *unavoidable* implications. A fulfilled millennium *proves* that the proper understanding of the original creation *cannot* be a scientific description or historical narrative regarding the origination of the physical universe!

How can we be so bold in our claim? The basic fact is that the *physical* heavens and *physical* earth were not destroyed in AD 70. The passing away of “heaven and earth” and the destruction of the creation at the end of the millennium *had no bearing on the physical operation of the sun, moon, stars, and planet Earth*. This reality proves that the *nature* of the original creation is defined by *covenant*, not the *physical universe*. The images and details used in Genesis 1 may be as symbolic as the elements in temple architecture involving heaven, earth, and sea, or as symbolic as the “heavens and earth” of the New Testament (Matt. 5:17-19; 24:35; Heb. 1:10-12; 2 Pet. 3:5-10; Rev. 21:1), but a fulfilled millennium *demand*s covenant creation for the physical heavens and physical earth *did not perish in AD 70*. God’s “heavens and earth” is God’s people in covenant relationship with him from the very beginning. It is impossible to reconcile young-earth creationism with a fulfilled millennium. *A fulfilled millennium requires covenant creation!*

All Prophecy Fulfilled

Witness 12: Jesus said all prophecy would be fulfilled during the days of vengeance.

There are many clear indications that the first century is the focus of the fulfillment of prophecy. Peter said that all the prophets who spoke, from Samuel on, foretold his day:

Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, *have foretold these days.* (Acts 3:24 NIV)

That is a significant statement, but the most succinct biblical proof for preterism comes from the Olivet Discourse:

When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near... For this is the time of punishment *in fulfillment of all that has been written.* (Luke 21:20, 22 NIV)

Jesus made this categorical statement before the New Testament was written. He speaks of the fulfillment of *everything written in the Law and prophets*. He said that the time of the desolation of Jerusalem is connected to the *complete* fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

This proves that the resurrection is now past because it is promised in Ezekiel 37 and Daniel 12. This proves that the great battle of Gog is now past because it is promised in Ezekiel 38 (and referenced in Revelation 20). This proves that the arrival of the new heavens and earth is in our past because it was promised in Isaiah 65 and 66. Jesus taught full preterism in his Olivet Discourse!

Some of the brightest biblical scholars in our generation embraced the complete fulfillment of prophecy in the first century. One example is David Chilton who made a clear statement about his views:

Some of you know of my sort of gradual movement into the full-preterist position... Here I am as a full-preterist.³¹

Chilton became a preterist because he understood that *all* of God's promises are fulfilled in what Christ has done. Even famous futurists sometimes suggest that more biblical prophecy has been fulfilled than Christians today know. J. Vernon McGee, an advocate of dispensational premillennialism, once made this most remarkable statement:

[T]he Bible is full of fulfilled prophecy. One-fourth of Scripture, when it was written, was prophetic; that is, it announced things that were to take place in the future. A great deal of that – in fact, a great deal more than people imagine – has already been fulfilled.³²

It is past time that Christians start believing what the Bible teaches about the fulfillment of prophecy. The biblical evidence stares us in the face. What will we do with it?

Conclusion

Our case for the complete fulfillment of prophecy, based on the testimony of many biblical witnesses, will lead naturally to many questions about what this means for modern Christians today. We agree with J. Gresham Machen when he summed up the biblically-grounded, *conservative* view of progress by saying:

We who are reckoned as “conservatives” in theology are seriously misrepresented if we are regarded as men who are holding desperately to something old merely because it is old and are inhospitable to new truths. On the contrary, we welcome new discoveries with all our heart; and we are looking, in the church, not merely for a continuation of the conditions that now exist but for a burst of new power.³³

Preterism may seem like a new discovery; it certainly should be evaluated closely by those who respect the ultimate authority of Scripture for doctrine and practice. We believe the case is overwhelming. We also believe that preterism will bring a burst of new power to God’s Church as God’s people begin to realize more completely what the Bible teaches about creation and prophecy – the beginning and the end. Our next chapter is dedicated to an introductory discussion of the *implications* of a comprehensive and consistent view of the Bible – covenant creation in Genesis and covenant eschatology in biblical prophecy.

CHAPTER 21

CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW



Up until now this book has focused on the past. We discussed at length what Jesus and the apostles taught concerning the coming of Christ and the end of the age. We covered the history of the Genesis debate and presented our understanding of a covenant view of the entire Bible. Our focus on what has come to pass is natural since preterism views the past in light of what God has done to fulfill all of his promises in Jesus Christ. For Christians who think the “end of the world” is right around the corner, preterism will come as quite a shock. For those who consider preterism, the most natural question becomes “What now? What about the future now that the second coming is in our past?”

Though we have focused on the past, preterism is really more about the future than it is about the past. The preterist implications for the future are limitless; preterism shows that Christians now live beyond the “end times” of biblical prophecy. This chapter opens a discussion of these implications for biblical Christianity. Keep in mind that we make no final claims and draw no absolute conclusions. Our goal is to discuss what we see as significant implications of this view of Scripture.

Just as the Church has learned more about God, his written Word, and his created world over the millennia, so too, has Christian worldview and application of the gospel of Jesus Christ developed over time. We believe this development and maturation of God’s Church will continue in the future precisely because preterism is true. Just as science continues to progress over time, so does Christian theology and practice.

The Bible

First and perhaps most importantly preterism changes how Christians think about their Bible. The common view of the Bible is that it is

a book of rules to be followed, a book of propositional doctrines which must be believed, or some combination of the two.

We do not deny the Bible contains rules and doctrine, but that is not the essential *nature* of God's Word. The Bible is a story. It is a family story. It is a *love* story; an epic of sorts. Unlike make-believe tales, the Bible speaks of what is really true about our world, our experience, and God himself. It speaks of God's love for all that he made and his willingness to redeem us by the means which models gloriously both his justice and grace. The Bible is the story of God's victory over death, won for his people, so that he can live with them forever. Every story in our world is a pale imitation of the plot and story-line that the Bible has been telling for thousands of years.

Contrast the Bible as one story (with many subplots inside the overarching plot) with our Bibles taken from the shelf of the local Christian bookstore. Notice how the Bible presents itself. Malachi gives us a prophecy at the very end of the Old Testament:

See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse. (Mal. 4:5-6 NIV)

Mark, probably the earliest of the gospels, opens precisely where Malachi left off:

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: "*Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.*" (Mark 1:1-2 NKJV)

Do you see the direct connection? The gospels follow naturally after Malachi! We know that Malachi's prophecy was fulfilled with the arrival of John the Baptist (Matt. 17:10-13), so there is perfect continuity between the *ending* of the Old Testament and the *opening* of the New Testament. The reason for this continuity is because it is *all the same story*. But what do modern Bible publishers do between Malachi and the gospels? They put a blank page with huge block letters that say:

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Why do Bible publishers insert that page? Did God give a divine order that every Bible printed must have a blank page between Malachi and Matthew? Who told us to introduce that page revealing that what follows is “**The New Testament**”? From where does the “inspiration” for that blank page with such big block letters come?

We believe the mere existence of that page is detrimental because it introduces an obstacle for Christians to rightly understand the Bible on its own terms. In what other story in the world would we think it proper to insert a blank page somewhere in the middle of it? Have you ever read a story that just happened to have a blank page right in the middle of it—a page which says what comes before was an “old” story and what comes after is a “new” story?

It is true that “Old Testament” and “New Testament” are biblical terms. “Testament” means roughly “covenant,” and the Bible does talk about an “old” covenant and a “new” covenant. However, when we view the Bible as *one* story, we discover that “new covenant” principles begin early in Genesis – the gospel is revealed before the fall – and the last of the “old covenant” shadows pass away, in finality, at the end of Revelation. This is impossible to grasp when Christians habitually think of the Bible as two segments divided by that blank “New Testament” page.

The problem with the common “Bible view” manifested in *every Bible sold today*, is that the terms “old” and “new” testament are applied contrary to the way the biblical story applies them. The “New Testament” page in between Malachi and Matthew shapes our thinking artificially about the Bible and ultimately impacts our faith. Once we think of everything before Matthew as “Old Testament,” and the rest as “New Testament,” then the Bible has been fractured. Inevitably, these two “parts” of the Bible get set against one another when the truth is that *they are all one story*.

God did not tell anyone to put that blank “New Testament” page between Malachi and Matthew. We suggest you tear it out! It has been the source of tremendous harm to biblical Christianity. The Bible is properly composed of: (1) the Law, (2) the Prophets, and (3) the Apostolic Scriptures. Yet it is still *one* unified and interrelated story. This basic fact alone, which preterism illuminates better than any other theological view, could revolutionize modern Christianity. It is our hope that preterism will change how Christians view their Bible. A firm Christian worldview can be developed only upon an accurate Bible view.

Creation and Human Life

In Chapters 11 through 18 we showed that the creation account is *primarily* given to covenant purposes and relates to the moral world of mankind. That means the creation account performs a much greater, deeper, and vital task for God's people than modern Christians often consider. Multitudes of Christians are so used to reading Genesis in terms of the intramural origins debate over the creation of the physical universe or the wider creation-evolution debate that they have totally missed the native focus of Genesis. The creation account is a powerful unveiling of the meaning, essence, and goal of covenant life between God and man. As such, the creation account shows the way human life was originally intended to be, and how sin perverts the creation order. It does *not* provide a scientific description of the origin of our physical universe, just as prophecy offers no scientific description of the end of our physical universe.

Here are some examples of how Genesis, understood on its own terms, should form and shape our Christian worldview if Christians would simply read it as covenant *gospel* proclamation:

1. Human work is dignified and encouraged as one of the primary purposes of Adam's creation. Eugene Peterson identifies correctly God's primary role in Genesis:

God is first presented to us in our Scriptures as a worker, a maker. In the beginning, God went to work.¹

Since Adam was made in God's likeness, Adam was created to work, even *before* the fall. Work is good, not evil. Christians who apply this to their own lives will love their own work and seek to do everything they are called to do in their vocation (or garden, so to speak) as obedience to God's command to them.

The sad reality today is that many Christians have a negative perspective on work due, in large measure, to the neglect of the theological point of creation. Once work in the Christian experience is reduced to drudgery to be endured or a "necessary evil" in life, a very bad thing happens. Christians do not prosper. Another natural effect of the drudgery and misery mindset is an impulse to retreat and escape from common life.

Modern culture encourages this corrosion of meaning with its many dystopian images that relate work to hell. Intense negativity breeds a

ghetto mentality which can manifest itself in a myriad of ways, from drug and alcohol abuse to complete immersion in amusement, sports, and entertainment. The natural result of neglecting the primary import of creation is escapist futurism and its self-centered, myopic individualism.

Genesis creation doubles as the *new covenant* pattern for our spiritual lives in Christ. There is no conflict between original creation and re-creation in Christ Jesus. Consider how Athanasius drew the parallel many centuries ago:

We will begin, then, with the creation of the world and with God its Maker, for the first fact that you must grasp is this: the renewal of creation has been wrought by the Self-same Word Who made it in the beginning. There is thus no inconsistency between creation and salvation for the One Father has employed the same Agent for both works, effecting the salvation of the world through the same Word Who made it in the beginning.²

Christians engage many debates about the role of good works in our salvation. Indeed, this single issue helped set off a civilization-wide conflict that has continued to rage for centuries in the Church. What role do good works play in our salvation? The answer is clear if we look to the pattern in creation. Just as Adam was created to work in the garden, so believers are re-created *unto* good works:

For we are God's workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus to do good works*, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Eph. 2:10 NIV)

Paul does nothing but reiterate the pattern laid down at creation. Christians are re-created in Christ in order to do good works. Creation first, then obedience. New life, then good works. Just like Adam in the garden.

2. Genesis also teaches against a "workaholic" approach by showing that work is not the only purpose of life. Marriage is the second aspect of life defined by Genesis. Marriage, a covenant between one man and one woman, is unveiled as the divine order and a great blessing. Contrast this with popular views of marriage in the modern world which suggest that marriage is "that old ball and chain." Many today act as if marriage is literally a curse! But what do we find in Genesis? Man is

created to protect, lead, and govern his household. Woman is created as the final touch on God's good creation to complete man and co-reign with him in creation. Masculinity and femininity equally reflect God's image; God created them in his image, both male and female. Marriage is the highest order of human relationship on earth.³

Genesis introduces the purpose and meaning behind marriage, defining its end goals in covenant relationship and friendship. Is it difficult to see that Adam and Eve also set the pattern for the covenant relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church? The hyper-literalist does not approach the creation account with these priorities. He is concerned with the scientific implications of the recent creation of man and how the Bible must refute the existence of "cave men" before Adam.

Perhaps modern Christian marriages are a mess in Christian churches because so many Christians have been cut off from the foundational *meaning* of marriage. Many *conservative* Christian households are in this awkward situation. They fight pitched battles against Darwinian evolution and supposed old-earth creationist compromises with it while possessing family relationships far removed from the creational pattern. Many Christians fight to defend Genesis from the "evil" scientists *only to make a mockery of Genesis by the way they live their family lives!*

The fruit is all too predictable as so many miss the creation account's covenant-theological priority: high divorce rates among Christians; marriages stale with boredom; marriages doomed to chronic nitpicking and infighting. Weakened Christians succumb to the temptation of pornography, adultery, and instant gratification in the face of marital frustration. This, in turn, fosters escapism and defeatism in life, once again buttressing a futuristic theology that denigrates God's created order. All of this must change if Christianity in the West is to have any hope for a bright future.

It is past time to recognize that Christianity in the modern world is not strong. Dedicated young-earth futurists tend to blame all the problems modern Christians face on belief that the physical universe is older than 10,000 years. What they fail to recognize is that the influence of secular unbelief, both inside and outside the Church, is not rooted in the inherent power of the naturalistic, secular worldview. It is not as if the scientific discovery of an ancient universe set off some Mongolian horde which overran Christian civilization. The power of the secular worldview is vastly overestimated because of the futuristic pessimism and conspiratorial thinking of young-earth futurism.

The real reason the influence of secular unbelief is so great in our day lies in the widespread *failure* of Christians to understand the Bible in its own context and present *real* Christianity to the world. Many turn the Bible into a scientific statement from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation. David goes out to battle wearing Saul's armor.

Christians have lost influence in Western society precisely *because* they have presented falsehood—whether young-earth creationism on one end of the Bible or futurism on the other—on the authority of God's Word. Christians have lost influence in Western society precisely *because* Christians have not thought deeply or acted wisely in response to the cultural challenges modernity presents to the Christian faith.

The modern Christian alternative to the impotent worldview of secular materialism is too often a sterile gospel of retreatism, pessimism, irrelevancy, and silly provincialism. On the Right, it is a gospel that cares for little beyond "soul-winning" and personal pietism. On the Left it is a gospel reduced to political policy and social action. In both cases only an enfeebled counterfeit of Christianity is presented. It should be no surprise that secular materialism or new age mysticism claims children who grow up in American churches by the droves. A hybridized gospel simply cannot reproduce itself from one generation to another. The real problem is not "them"—it is "us."

3. The third item of importance in Genesis has to do with covenant children. Children are honored in the creation account since the command to be fruitful is also a blessing. Yet Christians today, cut off from the apocalyptic vision of creation, devalue the role of children in life and impoverish the future. Christian culture that is true to its foundation in Genesis will be one that celebrates life, for the Christian religion is a religion of life—eternal life beginning now. Family life and relationships reflect the greater family of God in the Church, where we find brothers, sisters, fathers, and mothers in the Lord. Paul calls the Christian society "the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). The Christian religion is inherently a *family* religion.

Sadly, many children who grow up in the Church today leave Christianity when they become adults. Something is seriously wrong. Creation shows how God made the physical world so that things naturally reproduce themselves "after their kind." It should be natural for Christians who grow up in Christian homes to be Christians, and pass their faith on to their children. Yet this is no longer the rule, but the exception. One of the problems is that futurist Christians continue to present

a Christianity that offers little to live for in this life. Children can sense this emptiness, and will often go looking for something they think offers a full life.

As long as Christians conscript Genesis to fight battles over the age of the earth, over astronomy, over biology, etc., Christians will continue to miss the central meaning and message of Genesis. Genesis is simply not about the chronology of dinosaurs and “cave men,” coal and oil formation, or the Grand Canyon. The Christian worldview, rooted in God’s good creation, wastes away whenever the creation account is read apart from its covenant focus and purpose. This is another area where preterism offers a helpful solution to hollow Christianity.

Life in God’s Kingdom

One of preterism’s most significant conclusions is that God’s kingdom has been established on planet Earth. The kingdom has come, but only those in Christ can see it (John 3:3). The fact that the kingdom is primarily invisible does not mean it is not here on this earth, nor does it mean that the *effects* of God’s kingdom do not manifest themselves in visible ways. Jesus is the model of how heaven interacts with history:

But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. (Matt. 12:28 NIV)

Jesus brought the kingdom of God into history *during his ministry*. He changed the world by teaching about the kingdom of God. The apostles preached the kingdom of God wherever they went (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23). Note how the book of Acts and life of Paul conclude:

[P]reaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him. (Acts 28:31 NKJV)

At the same time, the early Christians looked forward to the *ultimate manifestation* of the full constitution of God’s kingdom on earth. John gave a vision of the coming of the kingdom of God as well as a *time statement* for its complete arrival:

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The kingdom of the world *has become* the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.” (Rev. 11:15 NIV)

John makes this statement toward the end of Revelation 11, the completion of the bridegroom portion. The seventh trumpet is the last. The kingdom of God became manifest as a completed structure at AD 70.

This transition period from the ministry of Christ to the “end of the age” has caused confusion among theologians for generations. The solution to the coming of God’s kingdom is not difficult if we look at the Bible as one coherent story. The story of Israel’s kingdom is parallel to the story of the kingdom of God. The physical kingdom was a shadow of Christ’s kingdom. Israel’s kingdom was formed out of the Exodus. It developed progressively as Joshua (the Hebrew name for “Jesus”), the judges, and the early kings of Israel conquered the land of Canaan. The fulfillment of God’s kingdom promises to Israel came through the reign of David who defeated all of God’s enemies. Solomon, the first son of David, ascended to the throne of Israel and built God’s temple. During his reign Solomon could honestly say,

Praise be to the LORD, who *has given rest* to his people Israel just as he promised. *Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses.* (1 Kings 8:56 NIV)

There is a clear parallel between this high point in Israel’s history and life in the kingdom of God since AD 70. Thanks to the *fulfillment of all of God’s promises in Christ*, we now live at the high point of the Kingdom of God, just as the reign of Solomon marked the high point in Israel’s history. By faith, God’s people today can realize the full meaning of the biblical historian’s remarks regarding the peace and prosperity during the days of Solomon:

The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy. (1 Kings 4:20 NIV)

The same is true of all those in Christ. Just as the Israelites had their common problems in Solomon’s day, we have ours. But no matter what Christians face, we now have a King who rules over all, a King seated on the eternal throne. Notice Isaiah’s prophecy as well as the time-frame he included:

Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righ-

teousness *from that time on and forever*. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. (Is. 9:7 NIV)

Is there historical evidence for the truth of Isaiah's prophecy? Absolutely. From the time the kingdom of God entered history, it has expanded. The authors of this book live in the western North America. Consider how far removed we are from the original land where Jesus and the apostles did their initial work. We are on the other side of the planet, separated by those lands by enormous continents and wide oceans! God's kingdom has expanded powerfully in the last 2000 years and we have no reason to believe this expansion will stop. Isaiah says the increase of Christ's government *will never end*.

We know why. King Jesus is far superior to any mere human king including Solomon. Solomon became unfaithful eventually. He later died and the kingdom of Israel was torn in two. Things went downhill quickly from there. But we know this can never happen with the reign of Jesus. He is the *faithful* son of David. He will never die, and neither will any of his people.

The practical implications of kingdom life are many. They flow from the truth that Christians have been planted in the land of God's promise forever (Heb. 4:8-12). Christians remain ambassadors of God's kingdom to the world at large (2 Cor. 5:20), helping to bring about the perpetual increase about which Isaiah promised. As the gospel is received by unbelievers, the visible dominion of Christ in this world grows through faith and salvation. God's kingdom is an immigrant nation with gates open from every direction (Rev. 21:12).

Kingdom living brings purpose and meaning to Christians and saves them from the destructive and empty life of self-centeredness so visible in modern culture apart from God. Understood in its broadest sense, the victorious kingdom of God gives children who grow up in Christianity something to live *for*. Preterism will unleash a new vitality in the modern Church because it naturally suggests a kingdom focus for all of life.

Time Perspective

Perhaps the most glaring way origins and prophetic views come together relates to time perspective. Consider the time perspective of most conservative Christians today. As young-earth creationists they believe in a (relatively) short past, and as futurists they believe in a very short future for history as we know it. Many claim we only have a few

years left here. There is a profound connection in this meager time perspective. There is a psychological connection between a short view of the past and a short view of the future of planet Earth.

What many do not realize about young-earth creationism is that it teaches millions of years of earth history is physically *impossible*, past or future. Not only does young-earth creationism teach that the earth is *not yet* older than 6000-8000 years old, it also teaches the earth *cannot* last much longer. They use a variety of “scientific” arguments to prove this including ocean salinity, continental erosion, and planet Earth’s rotational speed. One good representative example is the argument from the decay of the earth’s magnetic field. Young-earth creationists put it this way:

The earth’s magnetic field is not only a good navigational aid and a shield from space particles, it is powerful evidence against evolution and billions of years. The clear decay pattern shows the earth could not be older than about 10,000 years.⁴

However, we can still set a rough maximum to the initial energy from basic physical considerations... Such a maximum would limit the age to roughly 10,000 years.⁵

This means the magnetic field, which provides protection against cosmic radiation, is diminishing very rapidly and will be completely ineffective in a few thousand years.⁶

Maximum age-limit of 10,000 years? Ineffective in a few thousand years? In other words, our planet has an “expiration date” which we are nearing. *Just enough time for a thousand year reign of Christ on earth before earth’s final demise!* (Plus a reasonable safety margin so we will all be dead before we are proven wrong.) This is yet another connection between young-earth creationism and the futurism from which it sprang. Young-earth creationism bends the science to fit the premillennial beliefs of the early proponents of young-earth creationism.

The main young-earth creationist organizations teach the time perspective for the Bible-believing Christian must be *short*. This fits with “the time is short” mantra of futurism. What is strange is that there are some futurists who proclaim a longer time perspective. Some postmillennialists argue that earth history will last about 40,000 years (based on a literal reading of 1000 generations in Deuteronomy 7:9).⁷ Yet those who make these arguments in print generally follow young-earth cre-

ationism which teaches this amount of history is *physically impossible*! If young-earth creationism is true, then postmillennialism is false.

Old-earth creationism challenges the young-earth time perspective of the past. Old-earth creationists accept the idea that our earth and universe are very, very old – in the millions and billions of years. Old-earth creationism is introducing a *long time perspective* to modern Christians. But this time perspective is applied inconsistently by old-earth creationists who remain committed to futurism. Note this self-contradiction in a new old-earth creationist book by David Snoke. His problem is forced by his attempt to simultaneously maintain both old-earth creationism and futurism:

The whole point of an old-earth view is to say that things are as they appear.⁸

Finally, I am not saying that there is no place for faith in God despite all appearances. Our faith in the second coming is based entirely on his Word – the universe looks like it could easily last for millions of years.⁹

Snoke's time perspective has expanded toward the past, but he refuses to consider the possibility that the same time perspective applies toward the future as well (which modern science demonstrates). If God's creation is already millions and billions of years old (as Snoke argues), then it surely means that God has made our world to last. It is not about to fall apart any time soon.

While old-earth creationism is expanding the time perspective of the past for some Christians, preterism is expanding the time perspective toward the future for others. These two groups within the Church are a perfect match for each other, and have been for more than a hundred years. Milton Terry, the old-earth preterist theologian, suggested that it might take a million years for God to complete his purposes on earth.¹⁰ Terry was not joking when he said that. He thoroughly understood the implications of his statement:

We now submit the thought that these nineteen centuries of Christian light and progress are relatively but the misty morning twilight of the great day of Christ.¹¹

Imagine what this means. It means that Church history is still in its infancy. There are people who will live hundreds of thousands and mil-

lions of years from now who will look back on our era as “Early Church” history.¹²

Preterism has implied a long time perspective for the future since the 19th century. This is yet another reason why preterism will likely never be widely accepted by young-earth creationists who associate millions of years of time as an “evolutionary” idea. Imagine what will happen when the old-earth creationist time perspective of the past unites with the preterist time perspective of the future!

This will be a revolution within Christianity. The recognition that our earth *has been* here for millions of years and *will be* here for millions of years will prompt Christians to think deeply about the future. This will change the way Christians live out their own faith. Christians will inevitably become more future-oriented, and think, plan, and work for this *long* future rather than dwell slothfully in the shadow of a supposed imminent end of history. Eugene Peterson recognizes the importance of a proper time perspective within the Church:

This is going to take some time. Neither the mysteries nor the mess is simple. If we are going to learn a life of holiness in the mess of history, we are going to have to prepare for something intergenerational and think in centuries. The apocalyptic imagination gives us a facility in what geologists call “deep time” – a sense of “ages” that transcends the compulsions of time-management experts and at the same time dignifies the existence of the meanest fossil.¹³

Although Peterson is speaking to pastors, what he says is relevant for *every* Christian involved in kingdom work. In light of our long future here on earth as God’s people, Christian goals must be wider, longer, and deeper than modern Christians dominated by young-earth futurism can currently conceive. Covenant creation and covenant eschatology revolutionize our time perspective. Our world has been around for a long, long time, and will continue to be around for a *very* long future.

Missions and Evangelism in the Kingdom

A covenantal view of the Bible has many implications for the future of evangelism and missions. The very first point to understand is that preterism shows that the Great Commission Jesus gave to his disciples *was fulfilled* in the first century. Jesus sent his disciples into

all the world and they went into all the world. Notice what Jesus promised before his ascension:

But *you* shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and *you* shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and *to the end of the earth*.
(Acts 1:8 NKJV)

The book of Acts is the story of the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to the disciples. The story begins in Jerusalem (Acts 1-8:3). Then the story goes to Samaria (Acts 8:4-25). Paul's sudden conversion led to his missionary journeys in which he took the gospel throughout the Roman Empire, the "world" of that day (Acts 16ff). In fact, the book of Acts ends with Paul's arrival to Rome where he preached the gospel "without hindrance" in fulfillment of what Jesus promised in Acts 1:8.

Many Christians do not realize that Paul referenced the fulfillment of *every command* Jesus gave in the "Great Commission." This fact is most apparent in the Greek.¹⁴

- In Matthew 24:14 Jesus promised the gospel would go into all the world (*oikoumene*). In Romans 10:18 Paul stated that the gospel had gone (past tense!) into all the world (*oikoumene*).
- In Mark 16:15 Jesus prophesied that the gospel would go into all the world (*kosmos*). In Colossians 1:6 Paul wrote that the gospel went (past tense!) into all the world (*kosmos*).
- In Mark 16:15 Jesus said the gospel would be preached to all creation (*ktisis*). In Colossians 1:23 Paul said the gospel had been (past tense!) preached in all creation, (*ktisis*).
- In Matthew 28:19 Jesus told the apostles to teach all nations (*ethnos*). In Romans 16:26 Paul declared that the gospel was made known (past tense!) to all the nations (*ethnos*).
- In Acts 1:8 Jesus sent them to preach the gospel into all the world, (*ge*). In Romans 10:18 Paul says the gospel was heard (past tense!) in all the world (*ge*).

Don Preston sums up the preterist view of the Great Commission:

Every word used by the Spirit to describe the scope of the Great Commission is also used by the Spirit to describe the *fulfillment* of Jesus' mandate! Yet, some still maintain the Great Commission of Matthew 24:14 has never been fulfilled!¹⁵

The Christian success in the first century laid the foundation for the many years of kingdom life to come. Just as people from the nations around Israel immigrated to Israel in order to enjoy a better life, so many emigrate into God's kingdom today through the Church. The kingdom of God continues to expand its influence in our world through the spread of the gospel (Is. 9:7). Yet, Christian missions, at least for the last century, have been driven largely by a futurist view of the Olivet Discourse in which Jesus promised:

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matt. 24:14 NKJV)

How often have missions been framed in terms of this promise?¹⁶ Many suggest that completing this mission will bring about the second coming of Christ!

The problem (as is the case with every project that starts with false premises) is that Christian mission work has not been geared for long-term life in God's kingdom. Too often, mission work is undertaken in a climate of futurism which leads naturally to a shallow gospel presentation. It is not difficult to understand the root of the problem. If "the end is near" then the gospel must be presented to as many people as possible as fast as possible. Within this theological atmosphere, personal salvation and initial conversion is the highest (and sometimes only) priority.

What has happened to missions fostered in the context of futurism? The result is a confirmation of that old adage "haste makes waste." Here is the testimony of one close to the current mission scene:

It has been the experience of many missionaries to "win" a people group to faith in Christ, only to discover years later that no one really understood the message. They had adopted all the outward forms of Christianity, and their lives had changed in large measure. They prayed to God in Jesus' name, and they sang songs of praise, but they had actually blended their traditional world view with this new foreign religion, producing a hybrid that

was as devoid of life as the idols they once bowed down to. It was more than troubling to the missionaries; it was disheartening altogether.¹⁷

Of course, some might see this as confirmation that the end of the world is really close, this time for sure. Look how bad it really is! But there is a slow change in mission work today. Here is what has been suggested as a solution:

Thus was developed what is now called “The Chronological Approach.” Rather than beginning their message with “Christ died for your sins,” they began where God began, in the book of Genesis, with the Creator, the fall of man, the law, the blood sacrifices, and prophecies of a coming redeemer, thus preparing the people to fully understand the gospel of Christ.¹⁸

Inevitably, this preteristic “Chronological Approach” will lay the foundation for these new Christians to learn of the truth of the complete fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Preterism is, fundamentally, a “Chronological Approach” to the Bible. This is a very, very good sign for the future of worldwide Christian missions.

Mission work must open up far more in scope than futurist Christians think possible now. Rather than doing missions in the context of futurism, it is time for Christians to rethink their approach from the ground up. Christian missions can rightly be done only in terms of the *long-established* kingdom of God. Effective mission work will place as much emphasis on long-term *evangelism* and *discipleship* as it places on initial *conversion*.

New Christians need to be trained to learn to live in terms of God’s kingdom now, as immigrant citizens of the New Jerusalem. This is the perpetual City of God which has gates that are open to the nations (Rev. 21:25). God’s people will continue to bring the glory of the nations into it (Rev. 21:26). This New Jerusalem offers something much more than mere personal salvation or a religious “fix.” It offers healing to the *nations* through the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rev. 22:2). This is modeled to us by what the original Christians did in their world: They turned it upside down (Acts 17:6). The fact that the Christian mission was successful in the first century proves that radical success is possible for missions in our day if we preach the same rich, full-bodied covenant gospel that orders every part of life.

The Christian goal for missions must be nothing less than the complete conversion and evangelization of our planet through the gospel of Jesus Christ! Christians need to begin pondering long-term strategies that will bring this goal into reality through the work of individuals, families, churches, societies, hemispheres, and beyond.

One concrete example we might offer relates to Islam. For more than a thousand years Islam has been in conflict with Christianity. Some of this conflict has been caused by bad Christian theology (e.g., emphasis on the physical city of Jerusalem during the Crusades). Some has been caused by Muslim aggression based in the Quran's imperative of conversion by the sword. The overall trend has been toward escalating violence. We now have more than a thousand years of history to the conflict with very little to show for kingdom growth from within Islamic countries. Indeed, Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in the world today. What about the future?

Simply put, Christians need to develop and embark on a 1000-year plan to convert Islam to Christ. Islam will continue to be in conflict with Christianity until this goal is accomplished. It is a violent religion. But Christians, in America at least, have not always handled this challenge with gospel wisdom. Christians should think long and hard about how their futurist views (and the foreign policies they tend to encourage) impact the relationship Islam has with culture and societies influenced by Christianity.

When Christians in America give up their futurism and re-think their politics influenced by "last days" thinking (especially related Middle East conflicts and the modern nation-state of Israel) they will again be in a position to make serious progress for the kingdom of God. Christians need to focus on the *radical conversion of Islam to biblical Christianity* and subordinate their views of foreign policy to that goal. It is difficult to foster mission progress in Muslim countries when violence and war characterize the relationship between Muslim countries and the West. On the other hand, better relations, trade, and cultural interaction between Muslim countries and the West will open doors for future mission work.

Preterism provides the theological framework and time perspective necessary for the accomplishment of an amazing goal—the conversion of our entire planet Earth to Christ by the power of the Christian gospel.

The Christian Apologetic

The Christian faith will not progress as rapidly as it is capable unless Christians begin to speak truth about our world and our Bible. We hope that by now the reader can understand how young-earth creationism's claims about Genesis and the age of the universe have been a huge credibility issue for the Church. The real problem is the public, tenacious commitment to a radical change in the physical world at the fall of Adam, a global flood just before the time of Abraham, and a young universe. Young-earth creationism claims its view of earth history is taught directly by the Bible. If young-earth creationism's biological catastrophism and flood geology (along with its hyper-evolutionary "science") collapses, it inevitably takes the reliability of Scripture and integrity of Christianity down with it – publicly. There can be no Christian defense for falsehood. Young-earth creationism hinders the progress of the Christian gospel as few other things in the modern Church.

This same credibility issue applies to popular Christian views of prophecy on the opposite end of the Bible. How many times have Christians like Hal Lindsey and Henry Morris made public claims that the so-called rapture and second coming must take place "soon"? The credibility of Christianity is weakened with each and every failed prophecy. And Christians wonder why their beliefs are mocked openly by unbelievers!

Dispensational premillennialism has also been the foundation for pseudo-Christian cults which sprouted alongside the rise of modern premillennialism. Loraine Boettner notes the foundation of the Jehovah's Witnesses in modern futurism:

That movement has been variously known as Russellism, Millenial Dawnism, Watch Tower... and more lately as Jehovah's Witnesses. While it has many features that are opposed to the usual premillennial program, it also includes a very definite system of Premillennialism. Its superficial and literalistic method of handling Scripture... its strong emphasis on a 1000 year earthly kingdom, and its indulgence in date-setting, are elements that it has in common with what we have designated as standard Premillennialism.¹⁹

The same could be said about the Mormons who call themselves "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." What happens to Mormonism when Christians begin to stand on the biblical teaching that the last days ended in AD 70? Preterism offers the *complete refuta-*

tion of many modern cults because it demonstrates the error of *futurism* upon which their cultic systems rest. So long as dispensational premillennialism remains popular in the modern Christian Church, these “last days” cults will continue to gain members.

The problem is not limited to the modern aberration known as dispensational premillennialism. Even more traditional forms of futurism (such as the postmillennialism Boettner promoted) cause a severe credibility issue for the Christian faith, and has for generations:

It is now generally conceded that the apostles and the Church of the first century expected the parousia, or coming and kingdom of Christ, in that generation... Unless Jesus were himself in error there was no mistake about the TIME of his coming again.²⁰

Unbelievers can read the Bible, too. They know what Jesus and his apostles taught about the second coming. Don Preston outlines futurism’s affect on the Christian apologetic by saying:

Liberal skeptics and unbelievers have long denied the inspiration of scripture for the simple fact that the New Testament writers said the parousia was imminent in the first century, but that it failed. Infallible inspiration is therefore, called a myth.²¹

It is bad enough when the logical implications of futurism are pointed out by liberals and unbelievers; it is even worse when Christians provide fuel for the logic of unbelief. Here is a representative example of the implications of futurism.

Many early Christians, it appears, took Christ’s prophecies at face value. But before long questions arose. How soon is “soon”? “The Lord is at hand!” (Philippians 4:5) – certainly that must mean “within reach.” “The time is near” (Revelation 1:3) but what are we to think when “near” turns out to be far away? Had not Jesus himself declared emphatically and repeatedly that the first generation of his disciples would live to see “all these things take place” (Matthew 24:34; 10:23; Mark 9:1; 13:30)?... The experience of “delay” does not indicate a real mistake in the biblical witness or a real eschatological impasse.²²

Here is a conservative Christian saying that the early Christians were wrong. His response is that the problem, so obvious from the pages of Scripture, is simply not “real.” He is not alone. Futurism sets people up to reject the Bible, and it has provided many with an excuse to reject the Christian message altogether. If futurism is true, then it is difficult to justify the Christian faith to a skeptical world. As Preston writes:

If the New Testament writers were mistaken about the time of the parousia could they not be mistaken about other things as well?... If the New Testament writers were wrong about the time of the parousia, then the reliability of Scripture, the deity of Christ and the very existence of the God of the Bible is called into question. This is a serious issue indeed.²³

Liberals, atheists, and even Muslims use Christian futurism to argue that Jesus and the apostles were mistaken. This “error” is the single most used argument against biblical Christianity in the modern world. R.C. Sproul, noted Christian apologist and preterist author, explains the contemporary problem:

One of the ironies of church history is that a biblical text that reveals one of the most astonishing prophecies of a future event has served as a crucial launch pad for devastating critical theories that assail the inspiration and authority of the Bible... The critics argue that while Jesus was accurate about the coming destruction of the temple (an event considered unthinkable by Jesus’ contemporaries), He was, nevertheless, abysmally wrong about His coming at the end of the age. Albert Schweitzer saw this as the fatal blow to Jesus’ own expectations. Bertrand Russell appealed to the Olivet Discourse as one of his chief reasons for rejecting Christianity... The critics stress the time-frame references of New Testament prophecy regarding the Parousia of Jesus and the end of the age as their Exhibit A in their evidence against biblical inspiration. Christians who insist on inspiration tend to either ignore the time-frame references or spiritualize them away with special pleading techniques of exegetical gymnastics.²⁴

Muslims make special use of futurism to proselytize for Islam. They claim that Jesus was certainly a good man, but he cannot be whom he

claimed because he was *wrong* when he taught the “end of the world” was to come within one generation. The Muslim claims this fact shows that Muhammad is Allah’s *true* prophet.

Futurism provides an excuse for unbelief, and until Christians widely accept and proclaim preterism as the biblical truth about prophecy, there can be little hope for the widespread success of the gospel.

As Christians accept preterism in the future they will be in a position to show the liberal, atheist, Muslim, and other unbelievers that what Jesus predicted did come true exactly when and how he promised. Preterism turns the most common argument against Christianity into a powerful evidence *for* the truth of Christianity. Which will be more effective in the long run? A Christianity that boldly proclaims its own self-refutation or a Christianity that provides an intellectually satisfying view of all things from Genesis to Revelation? Only a faith that makes sense can convert the world to Jesus Christ.

We believe the consistent view of covenant creation and covenant eschatology which we have presented in these pages can take the Christian apologetic to a new level in our modern world. Among many other things, we expect it to lead naturally to a Christian renaissance in science: anthropology, paleontology, physics, astronomy, biology, medicine, etc. Young-earth creationism and futurism have combined to cause Christians to simply hand these disciplines over to the absolute control of unbelievers.

Consider one example of the natural result of Christian retreat from these fields. There is evidence for floods of biblical proportions in Mesopotamia. Yet these floods are not global events; thus, many Christians dismiss them as irrelevant to the Bible. But what if archaeological study could demonstrate the *physical evidence* and *chronology* for Noah’s flood? Would this not be a helpful aid to demonstrate the reliability and historicity of the earliest portions of our Bible? As long as young-earth creationism dominates the minds of modern Christians, this will never happen because it asserts that a local flood in Genesis is impossible. No sane individual spends his time looking for things he firmly believes do not exist and this sad situation leads (and has led) to many missed opportunities.

Preterism will enhance the Christian apologetic greatly in the years and generations to come, and this, in turn, will lead to growth of God’s kingdom over the long-term.

Unity in God's Church

Preterism also holds out hope to bring true unity in God's Church. Unity is a blessing that all should seek (Psalm 133). In the recent past many have sought unity among God's people by downplaying or ignoring the real theological differences among historic traditions within the Church. This strategy of "ecumenism" has never accomplished much of lasting value. Either the concept of truth is sacrificed altogether, leading to a shallow, irrelevant, and impotent Christianity, or the areas of unity are reduced to a tiny sphere. Christians are sometimes forced into unity by outside pressures and threats. At best, ecumenism has been a defensive aid to the Church.

The Bible shows that a divided Church is nothing new in history. Even some of the apostles had disagreements about Christian practice in their day (Gal. 2:11-14). But this disagreement did not annihilate the concept of truth for the early Christians. We know that Paul was right and those influenced for a time by the Judaizers were wrong. It helps to put modern disagreements within the Church into biblical perspective. Otherwise, Christians will have an unrealistic nostalgia for what has never existed in God's Church.

The parallel of the kingdom of Israel is also instructive. There were several times in covenant history when the tribes of Israel had violent disagreements among themselves. Likewise, it should not surprise us that there have been periods in Church history when factions set themselves against each other and create a virtual civil war of sorts within the kingdom of God. There has been plenty of infighting within the Church over the centuries. Too much fighting, we think.

The Bible not only records disagreements among God's people, it also records the *effects* of infighting. Jesus taught that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. When Israel was divided into two separate kingdoms, she became weak. There is a correlation in history between division within the Church and Christian impotence in the world. Division within the body of Christ leads to weakness. Look at the Christian scene today and the matching weakness of Christianity! This is why a more a complete unity of doctrine and practice remains important for all those who have a long-term vision for the kingdom. Greater unity leads naturally to a stronger Christian society.

Biblical preterism offers a realistic hope for the unity of the Church based upon the overwhelming teaching of Scripture. We have already seen how the divergent forms of futurism, common in the church today, all flow from a simple error – placing the coming of Christ in our future

rather than our past. Sproul voices the silent thoughts of thousands of sincere Bible students:

A second irony of church history is that a clear consensus on eschatology has never been reached... Each eschatological system leaves some serious questions unanswered... No framework has been devised that satisfactorily answers all the questions. Anomalies continue to plague each paradigm.²⁵

Preterism offers the one view of prophecy, indeed the entire Bible, that could unite God's Church. The answer is sitting right in front of our noses.

We hope that preterism will eventually lead to a biblically-based unity in the Church. Note how preterism has brought the two authors of this book together in a way that many would find inconceivable. One author comes from the heritage of the Reformed Faith, which emphasizes what is known as Calvinist views of salvation. The other author comes from the heritage of the Restoration Movement, now known as the Christian Churches or Church of Christ which emphasize what is known as Arminian views of salvation and baptismal regeneration. We come from completely different backgrounds on many other doctrines and practices as well.

Many view these two heritages as bitter opponents; historically, they have been involved in theological fights for generations. Yet, here are your two authors working together as preterists. Call it a Scottish theology "family reunion." We have more in common with each other *as preterists* than we have in common with many from our own heritage! This is a foretaste of future blessing we expect to come as preterism fosters more biblical unity among the body of Christ. We are living proof that preterism leads to greater unity within the Church. This unity will naturally result in renewed vigor and strength within the kingdom of God.

Does preterism solve all of our disagreements? Not at this point in time. But preterism does offer a new context in which to discuss the historic debates within the Church. Many long-standing theological debates, just like biblical prophecy, have reached a point that they appear to be irresolvable. Advocates engage in the equivalent of a theological food-fight as they argue for their "historic" distinctives. This goes on year after year, decade after decade, generation after generation with no end in sight.²⁶

Could it be that many of these long-standing conflicts arise because these debates were framed over the centuries within the context of futurism? Perhaps traditional divides on a host of controversial issues could be re-examined in light of a preterist view of the Bible. This book is a small example of how preterism changes the theological context of the discussion and leads naturally to new questions and new perspectives on deeply entrenched debates. Consider how preterist implications relate to the Genesis debate in regard to the flood and curse. Genesis looks quite different from a preterist perspective, and we could say the same thing about biblical prophecy from the perspective of old-earth creationism's view of a local flood and the presence of biological death before the fall.

We have hope that many of the longstanding debates in the Church might be resolved (or possibly transcended) if they would be completely re-examined in light of preterism. If nothing else, Christians might gain a new perspective on how to handle these debates. This will be theological progress if done with an eye to serve the historic Christian faith in the future. We encourage this kind of work, even though we expect many mistakes and pitfalls to be revealed in the process.

The bottom line is that Christian theology, like modern science, will continue to progress. Progress is hard work and tends to be messy. Every solution leads to a host of previously unforeseen questions and even some new difficulties. Human civilization in God's world has never been served by avoiding this fact. Progress has always been the reward from those who attempted something new, sometimes at great personal cost. We have offered our best attempt to explain a potential advance in the way God's people can understand their Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

For those who disagree with us at various points, or entirely, we merely hold out the request to show us wrong by a convincing demonstration of what the Scriptures teach. Until then, we are content to vocalize our beliefs, by any means at our disposal, that it is past time for Christians to move beyond creation science. The real glory of the Bible is that it teaches new covenant creation from Genesis to Revelation.

ART FOR YOUR WORLD

We realize that this book may have turned your theological world upside-down. If you are convinced that the approach outlined in *Beyond Creation Science* is the best way to understand the story the Bible tells from Genesis to Revelation, then you might be asking yourself at this point how to share what you have learned with others. You could always get more books for your friends. Quantity discounts are available. But sometimes handing a book to a friend or loved one, especially a book like this, can be an awkward and intimidating method.

We have another option for you. Are you interested in sharing your new views with your friends and family in a non-threatening way that will grab their attention, open discussion, and communicate the message in an apocalyptic, artistic way? Are you interested in buying the art that stands behind this book? Now you can purchase ground-breaking art for your home, office, or church created distinctly from the preterist view of biblical prophecy.

At key points in this book we used artwork from the cover to communicate our message visually. This handsome art comes from two original paintings by the accomplished artist, James Robert Kessler. Both of these painting are based off Jesus' own teaching in the Olivet Discourse:

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day no

one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot's wife! (Luke 17:26-32 NIV)

Jesus placed these three biblical events in a logical relationship. Jim Kessler brought together images of all three of these great covenant judgments in covenant history – Noah's flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70 – using stunning imagery and symbolism. The result is nothing less than apocalyptic art. This is practical artwork that honors Scripture in its original time setting and cultural relevance, and it is sure to get the attention of all who view it. Excellent reproductions of the original two paintings displayed on the front and back cover of *Beyond Creation Science* are now available.

The front cover displays the first painting titled *The Prophetic Vision*. This painting is reproduced on the same Masonite medium as the original piece and presents the three events Jesus referenced in Luke 17 in a vertical orientation. Herod's temple is placed at the center of the painting, symbolizing the theological significance of the Jewish temple in New Testament prophecy. The ark below the temple combined with the city of Sodom above the temple complete the comparison Jesus and the apostles emphasized throughout their prophetic teaching. This full-size reproduction measures 20 by 16 inches and is limited to 200 total copies. Each painting is numbered on the back and hand-signed by the artist which will only increase the value over the years to come.

The back cover displays the second painting titled *The Apocalyptic Vision*. This painting, reproduced on the same canvas medium as the original piece, presents these three events in a horizontal orientation on the background of a scroll. The scroll represents God's revealed Word: Noah's flood, the fires of Sodom and the destruction of Herod's temple are represented as key events in covenant history. They merge through the inundation of the outer courts of the temple with waters from the flood. The fires of Sodom in the background are reflected off the temple and water to unify the apocalyptic teaching of Jesus and the apostles. This is a powerful and provocative work of art when viewed in person. Even those not familiar with preterism will recognize this as a unique and unforgettable painting. This full-size reproduction measures 30 by 20 inches and is limited to 500 total copies. Each painting is numbered

on the back and hand-signed by the artist which will, again, only increase its value over the years to come.

Matching numbered sets of both reproductions are available while supplies last. Please see www.BeyondCreationScience.com or www.InChristVictorious.com for availability, pricing, and ordering information and enjoy apocalyptic art for your new world!

APPENDIX A

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HERMENEUTICS

It is easy to overlook the importance of hermeneutic principles* in any theological discussion. Most disagreements over biblical interpretation arise when two people with different hermeneutic assumptions look at a text of Scripture and come to different conclusions. The differences do not come from the text itself. Both people read the same text.¹ The differences come from the *principles* used to understand the text.

What is true of differences between individuals is also true of differences between entire theological systems. Theological systems are buildings constructed on a foundation of hermeneutics. Skewed hermeneutic approaches to the Bible inevitably cause skewed theological systems. The same issue applies to subcategories of theology. The debate among rival theological systems, at root, is about hermeneutics, *the principles of biblical interpretation*. Hermeneutics drive biblical understanding.

The Literal Hermeneutic

One hermeneutic method commonly accepted by conservative Christians is known broadly as the *literal method*. As we have seen in earlier chapters, the literal method is the foundation for a global interpretation of the flood and a global interpretation of end-times prophecy. Consider these discussions of literalism by prominent young-earth creationists:

The reader who desires to accept the Biblical account *literally* and without reservation will discover that the authors

[†] Our English word “hermeneutics” comes from the Greek word *hermeneuo* which means “to interpret.” Hermeneutics is the art and science of interpretation.

have shown such a position to be supported by excellent proof and *sound interpretation*... I would suggest that the skeptical reader, in like fashion, before he dismisses the *Biblical-literal* viewpoint of this book as unworthy of notice, should at least give it a careful reading... If a world-wide flood actually destroyed the entire antediluvian human population, as well as all land animals, except those preserved in a special Ark constructed by Noah (*as a plain reading of the Biblical record would lead one to believe*), then its historical and scientific implications are tremendous. (emphasis ours)²

I take the Bible literally unless it is obviously symbolic. Even where it is symbolic, the words and phrases used have a literal basis.³

Notice the similarity the above citations have to these comments by prominent futurists:

Dispensationalists claim that their principle of hermeneutics is that of literal interpretation."⁴

When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, but take every word at it primary, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context clearly indicate otherwise.⁵

Literalism is an attempt to understand words and entire passages from a plain reading as the text appears to the modern reader. This hermeneutic inevitably forces our modern mindset on ancient documents and equates a *literal* interpretation with the *true* interpretation. It accepts symbolism or metaphorical interpretation only when the biblical text can be understood in no other way.

The problem with plain literalism is that the original audience would not understand the text in the same way as the modern reader. Literalism assumes that our concerns were their concerns, that our mindset was their mindset, and that our modern questions are the questions the text was meant to answer. Morris illustrates this blunder when he says:

But there is still the problem of the age of the earth and the geological column. If this could be settled anywhere,

it would have to be in Scripture... It seemed impossible that God would have left such an important matter as this, with such profound ramifications in so many areas of life and study, unsettled in His Word... Surely God has the answer in His Word!⁶

Morris has assumed something about the Bible that first needs to be proved. Is the Bible written in order to settle issues related to the geological column?

The Grammatico-historical Hermeneutic

Another hermeneutic method is known as the grammatico-historical method. Milton Terry, the distinguished nineteenth-century preterist and old-earth creationist theologian, explains the approach this way:

Its fundamental principle is to gather from the Scriptures themselves the precise meaning the writers intended to convey.⁷

This hermeneutic method strives to interpret Scripture in light of Scripture in order to discover the meaning of words and passages in the Bible by how the Bible uses them. The assumption is that the Bible is coherent and can be used to interpret itself. This is the only way we have to reliably “get into the head” of ancient writers and catch the true spirit and full intent of what they wrote. Terry notes:

[W]e should also remember that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are a world by themselves. Although written at sundry times, and devoted to many different themes, taken together they constitute a self-interpreting book. The old rule, therefore, that “Scripture must be interpreted by Scripture,” is a most important principle of sacred hermeneutics.⁸

In contrast to the literal hermeneutic, the grammatico-historical hermeneutic considers the immediate context of a word or passage as well as the wider context of normal biblical usage in order to develop an interpretation. It recognizes that the Bible is literature and contains a variety of genres to communicate God’s revelation. It also places high value on how the original audience would have understood a text: what is called *audience relevance*.

The grammatico-historical hermeneutic suggests that original audience relevance is an important key to define the original meaning of any passage. It also considers external context surrounding biblical passages such as contemporary history and cultural mindset.

Similarity and Divergence

Admittedly, there is a large overlap between these two distinct methods. For many biblical passages it is unnecessary to differentiate between them. For example, when the Bible talks about sheep, both methods will yield an interpretation related to wooly domesticated animals or, in some cases, a metaphor for God's people. Both yield similar and compatible interpretations.

Other portions of the Bible highlight the distinction between a literal and grammatico-historical hermeneutic. A good example is when Luke records:

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (Luke 2:1 KJV)

There is more than one possible interpretation for this text. A plain literal method would conclude that, when Caesar Augustus taxed "all the world," he taxed everyone on planet Earth. That is how readers often think of "all the world" in *our* culture and time. On the other hand a grammatico-historical method suggests that when Caesar Augustus taxed "all the world" he actually taxed *his* "world," *oikoumenes* – the regional Roman Empire. One hermeneutic yields a *global* taxation while the other hermeneutic yields a *local* taxation

Though our example may seem to be an exaggeration, it makes an important point. Modern readers of the King James Version often see that a plain literal method is impossible in this text and instantly assume a grammatico-historical method. Modern Bible versions make this switch for the reader by inserting the word "Roman" into the passage. The NIV reads:

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (Luke 2:1 NIV)

It is easy to forget that the word "Roman" is not in the Greek text. Translators inserted that word so that a plain literal reading of the text

will yield the proper meaning. Now the text plainly says the “entire Roman world.” The reader simply does not have to consider issues of the original audience and cultural context to understand the proper meaning of this text.

Language Changes Over Time

The ultimate reason the literal hermeneutic remains distinct from a grammatico-historical hermeneutic is because language tends to change over time. Milton Terry explains:

Many a word in common use has lost its meaning. How few of those who daily use the word *sincere* are aware that it was originally applied to pure honey, from which all wax was purged.⁹

As cultures and conceptions change, so does language. G. B. Caird, the late Professor of Exegesis of Holy Scripture at Oxford University, puts it this way:

Current usage determines public meaning. But current usage changes, either by gradual development, or suddenly when a Humpty Dumpty pays a word extra to work overtime. The scientific study of semantic changes is recent, but the recognition of its existence is as old as the Books of Samuel. When Saul was looking for his father’s lost donkeys, his servant proposed that they should consult the seer Samuel, and a later editor has added a parenthesis, informing us that ‘what is nowadays called a prophet used to be called a seer’ (I Sam. 9:9).¹⁰

Literalism is at the mercy of dynamic culture and language. What is plain in one historical setting may be awkward or absurd in a different culture. It is inevitably a *relativistic* method of interpreting the Bible. Literalism can only be applied relative to the experience, perceptions, expectations, and knowledge of the individual reader. On the other hand, a grammatico-historical hermeneutic is *objective* because the text of Scripture and the wider historical context which surrounds it do not change. Those things are frozen in time.

Hermeneutics: Genesis and Prophecy

As we have shown in the pages of this book, these two methods of interpretation play strongly in modern debates over Genesis and biblical prophecy. A dogmatic literalism ceases to *conserve* the meaning intended by the original author. It fosters interpretations that would have been completely foreign to the original audience of biblical passages.

The modern reader's literal reading of the Bible is defined by modern cultural conceptions, definitions, and motivations that seem natural enough in our time. But there is danger when modern conceptions are assumed to be the common atmosphere and mindset from which we receive the biblical text. Plain literalism may sound pious and conservative, but it often spawns *modernistic* interpretations of Scripture. Our primary goal should be to find the *biblical* interpretation, not the *literal* interpretation.

The bottom line is that different groups of conservatives apply different methods to different ends of the Bible and get different interpretations. Literalism yields a global flood in Genesis as well as a global interpretation of New Testament prophecy. This is where the majority of modern Christian conservatives find themselves today. They often reject any other conclusion concerning Genesis or prophecy with little or no thought regarding underlying hermeneutic methods.

Old-earth futurists tend to apply a hermeneutic method much closer to what we have defined as a grammatico-historical method to Genesis and come out with a local flood interpretation. They then usually apply a literal method to New Testament prophecy and come out with common global futurism. They often reject any other conclusion concerning prophecy without thinking about the underlying hermeneutic principles they emphasize in their understanding of Genesis.

Young-earth preterists do the same in reverse. They apply a grammatico-historical method to New Testament prophecy and come out with a prophetic view defined by a covenant context related to the regional destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. At the same time, young-earth preterists in the past have tended to apply a literal method to the flood account and creation accounts and come out with global flood, young-earth creationist beliefs. They, too, often reject any other conclusion about the Genesis flood and creation without thinking about the underlying hermeneutic principles they emphasize in their understanding of prophecy.

Hermeneutics and the Credibility of Scripture

Our case is that the grammatico-historical method works on both ends of Scripture and everywhere in between. It not only works as well as the alternative, it is far superior. When literalism is applied *consistently*, it not only leads to interpretive nonsense, it destroys the credibility of the Bible.

Old-earth futurists often claim that a global flood interpretation of the Genesis flood undermines the credibility of the Bible in our day. Do they consider that their hermeneutic approach to prophecy and global futurism has the same effect on the other end of Scripture? Failed prophecies of a coming rapture generate more disdain among unbelievers who see nonsense for what it is.

Preterists often point out how a global interpretation of end-times prophecy undermines the credibility of the Bible, ultimately showing Jesus to be a false prophet and all his apostles tragically deluded. Do young-earth preterists consider that their global flood interpretation in Genesis has the same effect on the other end of Scripture? Their claims that the earth is young and that all breath-based life was destroyed in a global flood less than 5,000 years ago gives cover to atheistic evolutionism. Evolutionists will never have to answer for their reliance on fully discredited spontaneous generation of life so long as young-earth creationism is taught as the only option for those who believe the Bible.

Those who accept the current majority view of young-earth creationism in Genesis and global futurism in prophecy will likely continue to do so until a better option of understanding our Bible is widely promoted. Our message is that the better option has arrived. We merely need diligent consistency from Genesis to Revelation in how we interpret Scripture. The move to interpretive consistency holds out promise to unify sincere Christians in their understanding of Scripture.

The Primacy of a Bible View

Modern Christians speak a great deal about a biblical worldview. However, a biblical worldview can only be as good as the “Bible View” which underlies it. How can Christians ever agree on a biblical worldview when they don’t agree on a commonly accepted view of the Bible?

Terry’s advice concerning hermeneutics, given more than a hundred years ago, has turned out to be as prophetic as it is wise. He offered an important warning:

Inasmuch as these two Testaments differ in form, language, and historical conditions, many writers have deemed it preferable to treat the hermeneutics of each Testament separately. And as the New Testament is the later and fuller revelation, its interpretation has received the fuller and more frequent attention. But it may be questioned whether such a separate treatment of the Old and New Testaments is the better course. It is of the first importance to observe that, from a Christian point of view, the Old Testament cannot be fully apprehended without the help of the New... On the other hand, it is equally true that a scientific interpretation of the New Testament is impossible without a thorough knowledge of the older Scriptures. The very language of the New Testament, though belonging to another family of human tongues, is notably Hebraic. The style, diction, and spirit of many parts of the Greek Testament cannot be properly appreciated without acquaintance with the style and spirit of the Hebrew prophets... In short, the whole Bible is a divinely constructed unity, and there is danger that, in studying one part to the comparative neglect of the other, we may fall into one-sided and erroneous methods of exposition.¹¹

Dispensationalism is known for its imbalance. It tends to imply that the New Testament is all-important in this “dispensation” and the Old Testament is secondary or irrelevant to Christians. The effect of that theology is predictable in light of Terry’s comment. As Christians spent less and less time in the Old Testament due in large measure to the rise of dispensationalism, they naturally drifted further and further from the meaning and focus of the New Testament as the fulfillment of God’s promises which originate, in many cases, all the way back in Genesis.

A modern writer sums up the exact same problem regarding common interpretations of Revelation. Eugene Peterson offers this powerful illustration regarding the widespread neglect of the Old Testament context for Revelation:

The Revelation has 404 verses. In those 404 verses, there are 518 references to earlier scripture. If we are not familiar with the preceding writings, quite obviously we are not going to understand the Revelation... The statistics post a warning: no one has any business reading the last book

who has not read the previous sixty-five. It makes no more sense to read the last book of the Bible apart from the entire scriptures than it does to read the last chapter of any novel, skipping everything before it. Much mischief has been done by reading the Revelation in isolation from its canonical context. Conversely, the Revelation does some of its best work when it sends its readers back to Genesis and Exodus, to Isaiah and Ezekiel, to Daniel and the Psalms, the Gospels and Paul. St. John did not make up his visions of dragons, beasts, harlots, plagues, and horsemen out of his own imagination; the Spirit gave him the images out of the scriptures that he knew so well; then he saw their significance in a fresh way. Every line of the Revelation is mined out of rich strata of scripture laid down in the earlier ages.¹²

The significance of hermeneutics could not be explained better than these two authors. Their words ring true. The modern Church promotes Bible teaching that is splintered on the jagged rocks of inconsistent hermeneutics. The modern hermeneutic myopia screams for a cure. Erroneous exposition on both ends of Scripture embarrasses modern Christians of all persuasions. Only a holistic hermeneutic method, rooted in serious grammatico-historical study from Genesis to Revelation, can reveal the true interpretation of the Bible.

It is time we recognize something about Scripture. The Bible has amazing internal consistency from beginning to end. Many have pointed to its remarkable uniformity as proof for its divine origin and inspiration. Our Bible deserves an approach to interpretation that values its own internal coherence. Christians can honor the consistency of God's Word by setting a similar high standard for consistency when it comes to applying hermeneutic principles. This will not solve every interpretive problem, but it would be tremendous progress.

APPENDIX B

COMMON OBJECTIONS TO A LOCAL FLOOD

In Chapters 7 through 10 we made a positive case for a local flood. In those chapters we limited ourselves to dealing with objections that directly related to that case. There are some oft-repeated objections we deal with here. With these additions we believe the case for a local flood, related to a covenant context, is complete.

QUESTION 1: Why would God have Noah spend 120 years building a huge boat when, in a year, he and his family could simply have hiked out of the region with some supplies and camped out until the flood was over? This view makes nonsense of the story.

One bad habit young-earth creationism fosters is turning speculation about the flood of Noah into assumed biblical fact. Repeated over and over enough times, people accept the speculative theories about the flood as the very words of God. *Nowhere* does the text tell us how long it took to build the ark. Genesis 6:3 mentions a period of 120 years, but there is nothing in this text that says Noah spent this amount of time to construct the ark.

According to a plain literal reading of Genesis, the flood occurred when Noah was 600 years old (Gen. 7:11). Noah's sons weren't born until he was 500 years old (Gen. 5:32), but when God told him to build the ark it was for the purpose of saving his household, *including his sons' wives* (Gen. 6:14-18). This would seem to imply that Noah's sons were grown adults and married when they *began* to build, but it is impossible to know how long it took to build the ark from the text. The time has come to separate what our traditions tell us about the flood from what the Bible actually teaches.

The substance of this question seems to hold some merit on the surface. This objection is very popular in young-earth creationist literature.

Why would God need to tell Noah to build an ark when Noah could have walked out of the region affected by the flood?

Rather than presenting a problem for a local flood view, this question exposes how young-earth creationism's plain literal priority in reading the account entirely misses the biblical emphasis of the account. God planned the events to picture judgment and salvation. There is a spiritual dimension to the story, because the ark is a picture of Christ. What young-earth creationists often miss in their zeal to defend a plain-literal reading of the story of Noah's ark is that it is not about the geological history of planet Earth. It is about the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is made plain by how Peter uses the flood event in 1 Peter 3:21-22.

In God's plan it was important that Noah enter the ark as an "incarnation" of the gospel; Noah rested in Jesus Christ for salvation. Noah was figuratively "in Christ" while he was "in the ark." God has a plan whenever he gives his servant a mission, whether it is Noah, Abraham, Ezekiel, or Hosea. Any speculation that wanders from the redemptive purposes of God has lost touch with the biblical emphasis. Once we understand the redemptive purpose God has revealed, the answer to this question is clear. *To tell Noah to hike over there where he would be safe from God's judgment is to teach that man must get up and save himself by his own two feet.* Christians should focus on the example of faithful obedience Noah sets rather than speculate on how God would have acted if the flood had been a localized event.

This argument against a local flood also hinges on the escapism and retreatism so prominent in many forms of global futurism. Noah was not called to escape from the evil culture of his day by some sort of proto-rapture scheme – beating a quick retreat. By faith, he was protected in the midst of a wicked covenant world which reaped God's judgment. Noah ultimately inherited the land [*erets*] through covenant faithfulness. *The flood took the wicked away* (Matt. 24:39). Preterists committed to the first century victory of Christ over all His enemies will recognize the escapism behind this objection to a local flood.

There may be a physical need for the ark as well, even with a local flood. No matter how you read the biblical text, it appears the flood was a serious event. Boats were used in biblical times not only for travel, but also to transport bulky cargos. Is it possible to carry everything on a camping trip that will last a long time? Could Noah and his family carry with them all that they and the animals would need for many months? On the ark, however, there is plenty of cargo room for what Noah's household, animals and all, would need for the duration of the flood and

for rebuilding afterwards. This objection to a local flood is very weak once the theological design and historical context of the Genesis flood are understood.

QUESTION 2: Even if the “all” statements of Scripture are defined by a covenant context of the account, the local flood view still has an impossible problem regarding Christology. If the flood didn’t destroy all other humans besides Noah and his family, then doesn’t the flood teach heresy: salvation can come to man apart from Christ? Scripture does not stand if the flood was not global.

This objection has two fundamental problems. The first problem is it begs the question. The *flood* is God’s judgment. To argue that *salvation* would come to those outside the ark simply assumes the flood covered the entire globe. This would be a valid objection to anyone who claimed the flood was global *and* there were survivors. Those who argue for a local flood related to a covenant context do not destroy the type of Christ because it applies contextually. All those in this *covenant context* except Noah and his family were destroyed. Put another way, the flood is a true picture of Christ without being a globally comprehensive picture of Christ.

Consider the passover. *Only* those who had the blood of the lamb on the doorpost were “passed over” by the angel of death. Does this mean the firstborn, both man and beast, was slain in every household on planet Earth which did not have blood on the doorpost? No, the passover picture of Christ is true, even though it is limited to the *Egyptian* context. The same principle applies to the flood event.

The second problem with this objection is much more serious. The argument rests on the premise that a type must be physically perfect in a *scientifically precise and comprehensive way* in order to be true. What would this requirement mean for all the other pictures and types of Christ?

Consider another picture of Christ in Genesis. Abraham offered his son, Isaac, as sacrifice to God on Mount Moriah. This event pictured God the Father’s offering of his Son as a sacrifice for sin – the Lamb of God. Yet Isaac didn’t die in a physical, scientifically precise way. Does this lead to the heretical notion Jesus didn’t *really* die on the cross? Do types have to be comprehensive in a *scientifically precise way* in order to be true?

David’s life is also a type of Christ. We read about the sin David committed (2 Sam. 11). Using the assumption of the argument in question, that types must be scientifically precise and complete in order to be true, we would arrive at the heretical view that Jesus was a sinner, also.

Added to these examples is the problem of types and pictures in regard to Jesus Christ himself. Does the fact Jesus was circumcised or that he was baptized teach he was in need of the removal of sin? Or does his observance of Passover teach he needed a blood-guilt offering before God? Types and pictures of Christ are not required to be *scientifically precise* in order to be true.

Many present arguments similar to this objection as a scare tactic to ward off open inquiry into the scope of the flood. It is easy to scare someone looking into a local flood by saying any local reading of the flood ruins biblical Christology. But the demand of this objection is a precision of biblical types that is plainly absurd.

The nature of communication in the Bible follows a general metaphorical rather than a scientific precisionist method. Metaphors are not based on precision. They function by analogy. Pictures of Christ in the Bible are not syllogisms from which to formulate the doctrine of Christ. Pictures and types are true without being comprehensive in every detail. According to the logic of this rationalistic objection against a local flood, *every* type or picture of Christ would teach heresy. After all, Noah and his sons built the ark with their own hands; it did not come down out of heaven.

QUESTION 3: If the flood was limited to Noah's region of the world, then why would he need to take animals onto the ark? The account is clear that the animals on the ark, as well as Noah and his family, are the stock which replenishes planet Earth. Genesis 8:15-17 (NKJV) says, "Then God spoke to Noah, saying, 'Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you: birds and cattle and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, so they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.'" This proves all animals and people on the earth descend from Noah and the ark.

There are a few unexamined assumptions in this objection to a local flood. First, it is important to note that Genesis 8:15-17 uses the Hebrew word *erets* for "earth." This, by itself, cannot prove the context of the account is "planet Earth" or the globe as we think of it. This objection assumes what first must be proved.

When placed in the wider covenant context of Scripture, it is not difficult to see why animals are intimately involved in the account. Animals are always involved in how God deals with man: both in judgment and salvation. When Israel was in Egypt and Pharaoh's disobedience brought the plagues on the land, the plagues affected both man and

beast (Ex. 8:18; 9:1-4, 19; 11:5; 12:12, 29). Also, when God delivered Israel from Egypt he delivered Israel's animals as well. In fact, this was a bone of contention between Moses and Pharaoh (Ex. 10:24-26; 12:31-32). The Sabbath prohibited work for both man and animals (Ex. 20:10). We see another connection between man and animals at the conquest of Canaan. Israel was told not only to utterly destroy the human population of the Canaanites, but their animals as well (Jos. 6:21). When we get to the prophets we find that our gracious God cares not only for man, but his animals, too (Jon. 4:11). The animal sacrifices were to be the best of the flock or herd, raised by the owners' own two hands (Gen. 4:4, Deut. 12:6). The family had a personal stake in their sacrifice.

The easy answer to this objection is that God's covenant judgments and salvation *always* involve animals throughout redemptive history. All through the Bible it is as if animals are, in a very real sense, part of man's household. Those who live in a modern, urban setting often miss the natural connection between animals and human life because we are far removed from the agrarian context of the Bible. Perhaps the closest modern experience to help us understand Noah's situation with the animals would be our relationship to our pets. If we experienced a raging house fire, we would not only want our family saved, but our pets saved as well. Could we really say that our entire family survived a house fire if everyone got out of the burning house except for our beloved family dog?

It would have been distinctly out of character for God to save Noah and his family without including the animals that surrounded him. To argue that Noah took animals on the ark merely for the purpose of replenishing planet Earth after the flood misses the holistic character of God's judgment and salvation. God's salvation is total; it does not apply merely to individual human souls. This objection also overlooks the fact that some animals from the ark were sacrificed to God after the flood (Gen. 8:20).

QUESTION 4: How can a local flood make sense of God's prohibition of murder? If the flood only impacted a portion of planet Earth, physically, how could the terms of the covenant regarding murder be applied universally for all men? Genesis 9:6 says "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man." A local flood interpretation implies a local covenant with local laws against murder that wouldn't apply beyond Noah's "earth." If the spiritual lessons are universal, then the flood must have been universal, too.

The first thing to point out is that murder was wrong *before* the flood took place. Genesis 6:11 connects the wickedness of the people with violence by saying, “Now the earth [*erets*] was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence.” The violence of the land implies murder. We suggest that the people of the account (the covenant line of Seth) were aware of the record of Cain and Abel, a story which explicitly condemns violent murder. Cain’s fear and Lamech’s boast earlier in Genesis implies that the people referenced in Genesis knew those who committed murder deserved death at the hand of man. The prohibition against murder was a reiteration of God’s righteous standard of which they were aware since the days of Cain and Abel.¹

If the law against murder was given “new” in the Noahic covenant, then how could God judge that world by a flood? Would God destroy these people if they were completely ignorant of God’s standard of righteousness? How could they be guilty without law?

This objection misses the biblical pattern of how God works in redemptive history. The pattern we see throughout Scripture is that God introduces his universal righteous standard to his covenant people within their historical setting and context. Though the physical events are local they involve spiritual implications which have universal application.

Consider another time of covenant transition: the exodus. The time of the exodus was filled with physical events from the plagues on Egypt, to the giving of the law at Sinai, to the miracles of the wilderness journey. While these *physical* events were limited in scope, the *spiritual* dimensions were universal. From the giving of the law at Sinai until the “last days” of that age, all men everywhere who wished to live in covenant with Jehovah did so in terms of the Mosaic system. Though the events of the exodus were *physically* limited, the form of that covenant applied universally. God even promised Israel that the wisdom and righteousness of his law would be evident to all the nations who heard about them (Deut. 4:5-8). The spiritual influence of the Law went far beyond the physical locality of events during the exodus.

The same pattern applies to the covenant transition witnessed in the New Testament. The ministry of Christ, death, burial, resurrection, and coming to destroy Judea and Jerusalem in AD 70 all involved local *physical* events. At the same time, the covenant change from old to new led to universal *spiritual* application. After the transition from old to new the only way to relate to Jehovah God in covenant union and communion is through Jesus Christ. The local physical events lead to

universal spiritual application. This is a well-established pattern in covenant eschatology:

This judgment would have its physical foci at Jerusalem, but its spiritual scope would be universal.²

God always deals with man and accomplishes his plan of salvation within the local historical context of his people. This objection to a local flood is neutralized by a close look at the biblical pattern of *all* other covenant transitions recorded in Scripture. They ushered in a fuller manifestation of God's covenant within the context of local events. Why would the flood be any different?

QUESTION 5: Flood myths are universal in all cultures. We know the flood was worldwide because all cultures worldwide have flood myths. They must have these as a result of Noah's flood. This proves that all human cultures come from Noah's family.

While it is true that *many* civilizations have flood myths, it is not *universally* true. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* explains:

At one time this widespread distribution of a flood tradition was considered proof of the historicity of the [global] biblical account, which with some expected modification had spread throughout the world as people migrated from their original homeland in the Near East. This notion has necessarily been given up. We know, e.g., that numerous peoples have no flood legends in their literature. Flood stories are almost entirely lacking in Africa, occur only occasionally in Europe, and are absent in many parts of Asia. They are widespread in America, Australia, and the islands of the Pacific... Many do not know a world-wide flood at all, but only a local inundation... Often the heroes save themselves in boats or by scaling mountains, without intervening by the gods. Further, only a few of the flood stories give the wickedness of man as the cause of the flood... Facts of this kind disprove the claim that the biblical account is the parent of all flood stories.³

That still leaves us with the question of where these flood legends actually come from. How would flood myths originate in many cultural settings with their various details?

One explanation is geography. Most population centers, especially ancient ones, are centered near rivers. How many large cities in America are strategically located near rivers and river confluences? There are quite a few. It is not hard to understand why. Concerns for drinking water, bathing, and transportation could all be resolved by locating near reliable water sources. This tendency puts population centers at risk for devastating floods which could wipe out entire villages and cities in ancient settings.

A brief look at a modern example of a native flood myth shows a concrete example of how geography defines native flood myths. After the tsunami of 2004, reports came out about how a primitive band of nomadic people in Burma and Thailand escaped the tsunami without casualty. They are known as the Moken people; they are sometimes called the sea-gypsies because their life is spent around the ocean shore or traveling on fishing boats.

How did this primitive people escape harm when the tsunami hit? The CBS News TV magazine *60 Minutes* did an extensive report on their experience. Their interview included this exchange:

Why does Kalathalay think the tsunami happened? "The wave is created by the spirit of the sea," says Kalathalay. "The Big Wave had not eaten anyone for a long time, and it wanted to taste them again." Do the Moken consider themselves unlucky because their village was destroyed, or lucky because they survived? "I think they just take it as a matter of fact," says Dr. Narumon Hinshiranan, an anthropologist, and one of the very few experts who speak the Moken language. How did the Moken know that the tsunami was coming? "The water receded very fast and one wave, one small wave, came so they recognized that this is not ordinary," says Hinshiranan. "And then they have this kind of legend that passed from generations to generations about seven waves." It's a legend recited around campfires, bearing an astonishing resemblance to what actually happened on Dec. 26, 2004. They call it the Laboon, the "wave that eats people," and it's brought on by the angry spirits of the ancestors. Before it comes, the sea recedes. Then the waters flood the earth, destroy it, and make it clean again. "So basically, the tsunami myth is that the world is reborn after it is covered with water," says Simon."⁴

It is not hard to see how the flood myth of the Moken is born from historical experience in their particular geographical location. They have “seven waves” which flood the earth. This legend bears striking resemblance to their experience as a coastal people who interact continuously with the ocean; there is no reason at all to believe it came from the biblical account. Notice they do not associate their flood legend with a worldwide catastrophe, because they fled the seashore for higher ground and were saved.

Other high-profile natural disasters in 2005, with a little imagination, show how locale could naturally spawn flood myths. Hurricane Katrina and hurricane Rita both brought a devastating storm surge which inundated the coast of Louisiana and Mississippi miles inland in some cases (not just in the city of New Orleans). Imagine how similar hurricanes, hundreds or thousands of years ago would impact Native American peoples living in the area. Without the modern ability to forecast or predict a coming hurricane, these people could be decimated by a big storm. Survivors might end up secluded miles apart after the storm, giving the logical impression that each individual or family unit were the only survivors.

Flood myths, like all legends, originate in historical experience. That much seems true. But this fact does not mean the widespread existence of flood myths in primitive cultures in any way proves a global flood. In fact, their *differences* point to the *different experiences* of flooding events in specific geographical locations. Global flood advocates often forget that flood events happen regularly across planet Earth. They have been occurring for millions of years.⁵

QUESTION 6: You make a big deal about the Genesis flood being comparable to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Chapter 9 (Water and Fire). This point is very important to your local flood views, but I see a problem. The flood is sometimes used in isolation from Sodom in places like Matthew 24:37-39 and 2 Peter 3:6-7. If the flood is comparable to the destruction that came on Sodom (local), then why is Sodom missing in these texts? Does this difference in the way the New Testament handles the flood and Sodom not show that the flood was a global event even though Sodom was confined to local physical events? How can the flood and Sodom be comparable when the New Testament treats them so differently?

What many fail to grasp about the flood and Sodom is the role they play throughout the Bible. In Chapters 8 (The Flood and Prophecy) and 9 (Water and Fire) we noted how Jesus' comparison of the flood to the

“end” is based on the well-established link the prophets drew centuries earlier. Daniel 9:26 (NIV) says, “The end will come like a flood.” Jesus expounded on the prophets in his Olivet Discourse teaching.

Likewise, when Jesus included Sodom in the comparison to the destruction of Jerusalem in Luke 17:22-37, he did so because of the *precedent* in the Law and prophets. Note what Moses warned the people about the punishment for breaking God’s covenant:

The whole land will be a burning waste of salt and sulfur – nothing planted, nothing sprouting, no vegetation growing on it. *It will be like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah*, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in fierce anger. (Deut. 29:23 NIV)

The prophets to come later in Israel’s history also drew a link between the wickedness of Israel and Sodom:

And among the prophets of Samaria I saw this repulsive thing: They prophesied by Baal and led my people astray. And among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen something horrible: They commit adultery and live a lie. They strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from his wickedness. *They are all like Sodom to me; the people of Jerusalem are like Gomorrah.* (Jer. 23:13 NIV)

The frequent comparison between God’s unfaithful people and Sodom and Gomorrah (e.g., Is. 3:9 and Ez. 16:49) provides background for the New Testament. When Jesus drew the comparison between the flood, Sodom, and his coming, he spoke in a manner with deep roots in the Law and prophets; he was not teaching anything brand new in his three-way comparison in Luke 17:22-37.

There are some mistaken assumptions in the above question that should be pointed out before going further. First of all, Luke 17:22-37 is clearly a parallel text to Matthew 24:37-39 so the difference is not in *substantive things Jesus actually said*, but in the details Matthew and Luke *chose to record*. There is a good reason for the variation between the details listed in Matthew and Luke which we will get to below.

Secondly, the wider context of 2 Peter 3 does include a reference to both the flood and Sodom in 2 Peter 2:5-10.

Thirdly, it helps to realize that Revelation associates Jerusalem as a spiritual “Sodom” in Revelation 11:8. (Again, the precedent goes back

to the prophets of the Old Testament who did the same thing in their day.) At least part of the significance of Jerusalem's identity as "Sodom" in Revelation 11:8 is related to the reason for the difference between Matthew 24:37-39 and Luke 17:22-37.

If you want to understand why the New Testament writers used the flood and judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah in different ways, then you will need to think carefully about the *original contexts* of those stories in Genesis.

We made the case that the flood took place within a covenant context; the cause of the flood was the apostasy of *the covenant line of Seth* recorded in Genesis 5-6:2. We pointed out how the flood account in Genesis 6-9 is "enveloped" by the genealogy of Seth beginning in Genesis 5. This would amount to a "*Hebraic*" context for the entire event since the line of Seth represented God's covenant people at the time.

What do we find in Genesis 18-19? Who is involved in the judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah? Was it Abraham? Abraham offered priestly, mediatory prayers for the righteous in Sodom (Gen. 18:16-32), but Abraham was never in any personal danger from God's judgment. *It was Lot who was saved from Sodom, not Abraham.* The text goes on to tell us that Lot became the father of the Ammonites and Moabites (Gen. 19:36-38). These were *Gentile* nations that later caused Israel a great deal of trouble.

In other words, the flood took place in a covenant context dealing with God's people and Sodom took place in a context we now recognize as "*Gentile*." The parallel contexts of these stories explain the nuance of how they are used in the New Testament. Matthew 24 has no mention of the judgment upon Sodom because Matthew writes to a *Jewish* audience. Luke includes Sodom in the clear parallel because Luke writes to a *Gentile* audience. A similar priority is reflected in the genealogies recorded in Matthew 1 and Luke 3, as well as the difference between "kingdom of heaven" (Matthew) and "kingdom of God" (Luke).

This background context also illuminates the significance of the association between Sodom and Jerusalem in Revelation 11:8. The Jews who remained in Jerusalem by AD 70 had not only become morally corrupt as a result of their defiant rejection of God in Christ Jesus, they had also become (spiritually speaking) *Gentiles*. They were no longer God's people at all since they broke the covenant and rejected the Messiah spoken of in the Law and prophets (Rev. 2:9; 3:9). They were cast away from God's true presence and covenant blessing, cut out of the olive tree because of unbelief (Rom. 11:20-22).

The reason for the variance in the Olivet Discourse between Matthew and Luke has to do with the Jew/Gentile dynamic of the New Testament. Peter works with the same nuance in 2 Peter 3. These details provide another compelling evidence for the covenant context of the flood account in Genesis, related to the progeny of Seth. The variation by which the flood and Sodom are used shows how these two events in covenant history are perfectly balanced in the New Testament context. Why? The flood and Sodom are balanced because they are both local judgments applied to specific contexts, what we recognize as “Jew” and “Gentile” by the time of the New Testament. Together, these two events in Genesis show that God holds both Jew and Gentile accountable to him – a message writ large across the pages of the New Testament.

This nuance explains why Sodom is not mentioned directly in 2 Peter 3:5-7. The parallel in the text is 1) creation, 2) flood, and 3) consummation. The creation has to do with God’s people; the flood came upon God’s (unfaithful) people; the fire was coming upon God’s (unfaithful) people to bring about the “end.” Just as the waters of the flood destroyed the apostate line of Seth, save Noah, so the fires of God’s judgment were coming upon Judea, Jerusalem and the temple. Peter naturally leaves out Sodom (representing Gentiles) at this point in 2 Peter 3:5-7. Fire did not engulf the entire Gentile world, whether globally or even upon entire the Roman Empire in the first century. Rome did not fall until many centuries later. The physical events of AD 70 were centered on “the land” which God’s covenant people of old called “home.”

A global view of the flood in Genesis destroys this intricate detail that appears very important in the matrix of the New Testament. Global flood doctrine, like a global view of prophecy and a supposed worldwide consummation, is the natural result of neglecting the principle of *covenant context* so important throughout the entire Bible.

(Note: For further discussion or to view additional questions regarding the main content and thesis of this book, please visit www.Beyond-CreationScience.com. If you have a relevant question that you would like to have answered, then follow the directions on the menu item titled: “Ask a Question.”)

APPENDIX C

OVERVIEW OF OLD-EARTH CREATIONIST VIEWS

No investigation of creationism is complete without a brief survey of old-earth views. Advocates for young-earth creationism often demonize all opposing viewpoints as unholy compromise with evolution or even outright apostasy. Christians who find themselves in this environment are often discouraged from open and objective evaluation of old-earth creationism. The practical effect is that multitudes accept young-earth creationist claims about science and Scripture uncritically and never investigate alternative interpretations. Ironically, the same kind of demonization is often directed against minority views of prophecy such as preterism.

Those who have new interest in the Genesis debate as a result of this book may find an introduction to common old-earth creationist viewpoints helpful. Below is a brief outline and discussion of common views of creation which differ from our presentation of creation, but are also compatible with a universe that is millions or billions of years old.

Gap Theory

The gap theory is also called the ruin-restitution theory. It posits that Genesis 1 is focused on a re-creation of a ruined world. It developed from an earlier view which appears to have been widely held in the 1600's and probably dates to the Middle Ages.¹

John Lightfoot (1602-1675) and William Whiston (1667-1752) gave the clearest statement of this older view. Essentially, they believed that Genesis 1:1 was the creation of the universe many tens of thousands of years in the past. Genesis 1:3 started a narrative on the local creation of Palestine. They believed a gap of tens of thousands of years to be somewhere in between the opening statement of Genesis and what we call the creation week. This appears to have been the most common view among the educated in Europe during their era.

This view slowly gave rise to modern geology while adapting to an ever growing gap. The language of the King James Bible may have been partially responsible for a shift in thinking from a creation centered in biblical Mesopotamia to a global re-creation. The view contends that God destroyed everything and started from scratch with Adam and again with Noah. This allowed for any number of destructions in the more distant, pre-Adamite past and led to the belief that Genesis 1:2 spoke of another catastrophe (which many believed geology confirmed).

The modern gap theory first gained popularity in Europe from the writings of Thomas Chalmers in the early 1800s. It was guaranteed American success when it was adopted by C.I. Scofield and included in the *Scofield Reference Bible*. It remained a popular view with dispensational fundamentalists until the rise of modern young-earth creationism in the second half of the 20th century.

The challenge for the gap theory is that, like other gap developments attributed to dispensationalism, i.e., Daniel's 70 weeks, you either see the gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:3 or you don't. It is difficult to understand how the gap theory could ever be widely accepted because it appears arbitrary in its handling of the creation text.

We note in passing that it is not just dispensational premillennialists who resort to the gap method. Mild preterists (a.k.a. "partial-preterists") often resort to a similar type of eschatological "gap theory" in the Olivet Discourse. Some preterists separate details of Jesus' prophecy by thousands of years. They claim that *some* of what Jesus predicted was fulfilled in AD 70 while *other* details in the Olivet Discourse will be fulfilled at the end of the world. Partial-preterists usually posit this eschatological "gap" between Matthew 24:35 and 24:36. The fact that most partial-preterists rail against the gap methodology in Genesis and Daniel while making full use of the method in Matthew 24 is one of many strange self-contradictions inherent in partial-preterism.

The one significant recent development on the gap theory came with the 1996 release of *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* by John Sailhamer. Sailhamer's book is an interesting read. It is a development along the lines of Lightfoot's ancient gap theory. To date, this view has not captured much attention, and Sailhamer's book has gone out of print. It appears the gap theory will likely fade in the years to come.

Day-Age Theory

While the gap theory reconciled the evidence of geological *time* with the Genesis account it did not provide for geological *sequence*. Geologists began to discover an order to the fossil record in the geological layers. There is a general sequence from the older (lower) layers of basic life forms to the younger (upper) layers of complex plant and animal life. Two of the most respected geologists in the 19th century, James Dana and J.W. Dawson (both believed in divine creation), saw parallels in this order to the creation account of Genesis.²

The day-age approach to the Genesis account attempts to reconcile the biblical record with the geological record. Each day in the creation account corresponds to a period of time as testified by geology. Though these days are distinct periods of time, they may not all be equal in duration. This theory is also called “concordism” since it seeks essential harmony between Genesis and geology. Hugh Ross and Gleason Archer define it this way:

Our day-age interpretation treats the creation days literally as six sequential, long periods of time. Integrating biblical and scientific data, we assert that the physical creation events reported in Genesis appear in correct sequence and scientifically defensible terms.³

Most who hold to this theory affirm progressive creation; they suggest that God stepped in and directly created life at various points in creation. Modern proponents of day-age theory include Hugh Ross, Gleason Archer, Robert Newman,⁴ and David Snoke.⁵

The weakness of the day-age approach is its fundamental similarity to the methods of creation science interpretation. The presupposition undergirding this theory is that the creation account is communicated in scientific terms.⁶ Advocates of the view are disproportionately professional scientists who read the Bible in light of their scientific experience.

Though it may be commendable to present widely accepted and defensible scientific discoveries as consistent with the biblical record, it is not self-evident that this is the purpose of the Genesis account. If true, it would mean that the Genesis account could not have been understood until the rise of modern geology. It is curiously chrono-centric to the modern scientific age. In this sense it parallels dispensational futurism which reads the Bible as if it is written directly to a modern audience.

The day-age approach comes to radically different conclusions than “creation science” theories regarding the age of the universe and the geographical scope of Noah’s flood, but the hermeneutic method remains a form of literalism. This fact is presented as an argument for the view:

Those who advocate the 24-hour interpretation characterize competing views as neither plain nor literal. We contend, however, that the day-age interpretation is literal, and we support that contention with linguistic data.⁷

If the methodology of reading the creation account is essentially dispensational in its commitment to literalism, it should be no surprise that day-age proponents are just as futurist as their “creation science” opponents. Hugh Ross reads the book of Revelation in the same futuristic, scientific, and literal vein as his young-earth opponents:

According to Revelation 21, once God permanently conquers evil, this present universe will be replaced by a brand-new one... With evil no longer a factor, the purpose for our universe will have been fulfilled. Therefore, God will remove from existence this universe with its laws of physics. He will replace it with new heavens, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem, with laws of physics designed to make possible our eternal life and rewards in His presence.⁸

We have already made a biblical case against a futurist view of Revelation 21 in the preceding pages. The main problem is simply that end-times prophecy deals primarily with redemption and the end of a *covenant world*, not the end of our physical universe.

Many of the criticisms this book has raised against the method of literalism that we find in young-earth creationism apply equally well to day-age methods. Day-age views seem blind to the covenant-centered focus in biblical language and imagery. They are also a modernistic approach to Genesis in the same way that young-earth creationism is a modernistic approach to Genesis. Like their young-earth opponents, day-age advocates assume a modern context and intent in both Genesis and prophecy.

Understood in this manner, the day-age viewpoint is a mirror-image of young-earth creationism. While day-age advocates tend to read the Bible in terms of their scientific experience, young-earth creationists tend to read science in terms of their interpretation of the Bible.

Both views, however, fundamentally agree that the Bible communicates the creation of the universe using scientific terms and precision.

Framework Interpretation Theory

A relatively new interpretation of the creation account is widely known as the framework view. What separates the framework view from other interpretations of Genesis 1 is the belief the creation narrative is given primarily to theological purposes that may not translate into a strict chronological sequence or provide scientific conclusions. Lee Irons gives this definition of the framework view:

The framework interpretation strives to understand the text of Genesis 1:1-2:3 on its own terms, independent of any questions that may arise from the empirical study of origins... The Holy Spirit has given us an inerrant historical account of the creation of the world, but that account has been shaped, not by a concern to satisfy our curiosity regarding sequence or chronology, but by predominantly theological and literary concerns.⁹

Much of the modern framework view was presented in 1924 by a Dutch theologian named Arie Noordtzij. The view was popularized in America by the Reformed theologian, Herman Ridderbos. Further refinement was made by another Reformed theologian, Meredith Kline. Though the details of the framework view are new, the basic approach to Genesis 1 finds its roots all the way back to Augustine's view of the days of Genesis. Lee Irons explains, "The modern framework interpretation builds upon Augustine's figurative interpretation of the days and is in fundamental continuity with it."¹⁰ Augustine, of course, presented the seven days of creation as a figurative literary device used to communicate God's incomprehensible act of creation.

Strictly speaking, the framework view is silent on any particular age of the universe:

Careful exegesis shows that the text cannot be used to determine how much time has elapsed since the creation.¹¹

Augustine believed in an instantaneous creation; it takes God no time to create anything, Augustine reasoned. God used the six-day framework in Genesis to help us understand God's creation. Practically speaking, most who support the framework view today tentatively

accept general scientific evidence which points to an old universe and earth. In general, they can be classed as progressive creationists though scientific concerns are peripheral in framework literature.

The specific details of the framework view go beyond our purpose here, but are well worth the study for those interested. It boils down to reading the creation account in Genesis 1 as theologically ordered poetry rather than a sequential or literal order of direct historical record. The strength of the framework view is that it rightly places Genesis 1 in its primary theological-covenantal context. Lee Irons writes:

The real theological message [of the creation account] has been drowned out by its alleged sequential and chronological message. This fundamental misreading of the text is based on the unexamined assumption regarding the nature of biblical history. Both the 24-hour and day-age views fail to recognize that, while Scripture inerrantly reports historical and chronological information, it always does so with a covenantal and redemptive historical purpose.¹²

Preterists should appreciate how framework advocates prize the nature of literary form in the creation account. A preterist approach to prophecy is much closer to the methodology of the framework view than the simplistic literalism of other views.

The weakness of the framework view is its tremendous complexity with its triads, upper and lower registers, and commitment to ordinary providence during the creation week. Many have suggested the view is contrived by exegetical gymnastics and represents, at best, theological eccentricity. The view is also saddled with the typical problems of futurism which leaves the redemption of Christ incomplete:

Although it is presently seen only with the eyes of faith, Christ is seated as our King and Priest in the upper register. From there He will come in the clouds of heaven with all his holy angels to execute judgment upon the world and to bring about a perfect and eternal union between the visible and invisible worlds... Clothed in the brilliance of the glory of God, the new Jerusalem will come down out of heaven and the dwelling place of God shall be with men (Rev. 21:2-3, 10-11).¹³

Note how the focus on the creation of the physical universe in the framework view causes a corresponding futurist view of the consum-

mation. The framework view begins with a physical universe reading of creation in Genesis 1:1 and ends with a futurist view of the consummation in Revelation 21-22.

All in all, the framework view is more compatible with preterist priorities in reading Scripture in comparison to other views. Some framework insights can be appreciated, particularly the emphasis on the nature and priority of the creation account, without accepting the entire view. What is needed, however, is an approach that applies this appreciation for the nature and priority of biblical language consistently from Genesis to Revelation.

A prophetic or covenant view of creation resembles the framework view in some details, but is far superior because covenant creation shows that the central subject of creation is God's people and the principles of covenant life God has ordained, just as covenant eschatology applies the same *gospel* principles to the consummation.

Conclusion

The common views of creation have historically been focused on the physical universe. The reason is that all these forms of creationism (including young-earth creationism) were developed in a context of futurist views of prophecy. All of these views expect the “end” to be related to the physical universe, just as they assume the “beginning” speaks about the physical universe. This fundamental mistake, which neglects the centrality of the covenant in Scripture, accounts for many of the seemingly irresolvable debates over Genesis. We expect that as the Church abandons a futurist view of prophecy and begins to understand the “end” in its proper *covenant* context, the implications for a biblical understanding of covenant creation will be developed further. Covenant eschatology demands covenant creation.

NOTES

Chapter 1 – *What Did Jesus Say?*

1. Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*, 4th ed., (Powder Springs: American Vision, 1999), p. 200.
2. Ibid., p. 43.
3. Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*, 3rd ed., (Atlanta: American Vision, 1997), p. 117.

Chapter 2 – *Time is Running Out*

1. See Acts 3:22ff; Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19.
2. The same principle of justice applies to the persecution of Jesus' followers: c.f. 2 Thessalonians 1:5-7.
3. See Acts 17:1-4.
4. Henry Morris, *Creation and the Second Coming* (Green Forest, AZ: Master Books, 1991), p. 165.
5. See Acts 7:54 ff.
6. We do not mean to imply Peter referenced *only* Jewish scoffers, though the scoffers are predominantly Jewish unbelievers. We know this because Paul called the unbelieving Jews "scoffers" in Acts 13:41 – in the very same passage Paul quoted from Habakkuk!
7. Don K. Preston, *The Elements Shall Melt: A Study of 2 Peter 3* (Ardmore, OK: JaDon Productions, 2006), p. 62.
8. Compare Matthew 24:10 to the scoffers in 2 Peter 3 and 2 Timothy 3:1-9. 2 Timothy is very late, probably Paul's last letter before he was beheaded by Nero.
9. For a compelling case for an early date for Revelation, see Kenneth L. Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 1998).

Chapter 3 – *When Did This Happen?*

1. For a strong case that the New Testament books were written before AD 70, see John A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976).
2. The reason we say this is Jerusalem plays an important role in New Testament history as demonstrated by these representative examples: Acts 1:4; 2:5f; 3:1f; 4:5f; 4:27f; 6:7; 8:1; 8:25; 8:27; 9:13; 11:2; 11:22-27; 15:1-21; 20:16; 21:12-16; 24:11; and 25:7. If Jerusalem is this prominent

in the book of Acts, then why wouldn't the New Testament writers mention the Jewish Wars and what happened to Jerusalem if they wrote after AD 70? The only reasonable conclusion is that there is no mention of the destruction of Jerusalem in the New Testament because the entire New Testament was complete *before* Rome destroyed the city.

3. Eusebius, *Church History*, Book III, Chapter 5, paragraph 3.
4. Eusebius, *Church History*, Book III, Chapter 5, paragraph 4.

Chapter 4 – *The End of a Covenant World*

1. Paul parallels this line of teaching in 1 Timothy 4:1-3, 6 and 2 Timothy 3:1-8. The great apostasy was a reality in his day and governed his warnings to Timothy.
2. David Chilton, *Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Ft. Worth: Dominion Press, 1987), p. 16n.
3. Kurt M. Simmons, *The Consummation of the Ages: A.D. 70 and the Second Coming in the Book of Revelation* (Bimillennial Preterist Association, 2003), p. 38.
4. The original reference to the “last days” comes from the book of Genesis at the time Jacob blessed his 12 sons and spoke prophetically of their future: “And Jacob called his sons and said, ‘Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the *last days*.’” (Gen. 49:1 NKJV) The fact that the first reference in the Bible to the “last days” appears in relationship to the 12 sons of Jacob suggests that the “last days” in the New Testament relate to a covenant context – Israel.
5. See Matthew 12:30-33; Ephesians 1:21; 1 Timothy 6:19; Hebrews 6:5.
6. Kurt M. Simmons, *The Consummation of the Ages*, p. 37-38.
7. The two examples mentioned are found in Acts 16:1-3 and Acts 21:20-26. The early part of Acts is full of examples of Jewish Christians participating in temple worship and celebrating the feasts according to the Law of Moses. We do not often consider that Pentecost was a feast required by the Law, or that Paul, on occasion, continued to celebrate the Jewish traditions as evidenced by examples in Acts 18:21; 20:6; 20:16. Covenant transition did not take place instantaneously.
8. Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, p. 542.
9. Preston, *The Elements Shall Melt*, p. 172.
10. To the Jewish mind of Jesus’ day, the temple was a symbolic “heaven and earth.” It represented all of creation in miniature. In contemporary secular literature, Josephus provides a perfect example in *Antiquities*, 3:6:4 and 3:7:7.
11. John Noë, *Beyond the End Times: The Rest of... The Greatest Story Ever Told* 2nd Ed. (Bradford, PA: IPA, 1999), p. 246.

12. See Isaiah 13:9ff, 34:4-5, and Jeremiah 4:23-31 as representative examples.
13. Perhaps the most explicit prophecy of this eternal kingdom of the Messiah is Daniel 2. Note the time when Daniel predicted it would come and begin to grow, i.e., the days of the Roman Empire.
14. Popular presentations of preterism include Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 1999); R.C. Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998); David Chilton, *The Great Tribulation* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1997); John Noë, *Beyond the End Times: The Rest of... The Greatest Story Ever Told* 2nd Ed. (Bradford, PA: IPA, 1999). More technical presentations include James Stuart Russell, *The Parousia: A Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999); Milton Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics: A Study of the Most Notable Revelations of God and of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, [1898] 1988); Don K. Preston, *The Elements Shall Melt With Fervent Heat: A Study of 2 Peter 3* (Ardmore, OK: JaDon Publications, 2006); David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Ft. Worth: Dominion Press, 1987).
15. R.C. Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), pp. 202-203.

Chapter 5 – *The Divide: 1830*

1. Henry M. Morris, *History of Modern Creationism* (San Diego: Master Books, 1984), p. 329.
2. Ian T. Taylor, *In the Minds of Men: Darwin and the New World Order* 3rd Ed. (Toronto: TFE Publishing, 1991), pp. 70-71.
3. Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 179.
4. Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species*, 6th Edition, (London: John Murray, [1872] 1902), p. 413.
5. Stephen J. Gould, *Evolution Now: A Century After Darwin*, ed. John Maynard Smith, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1982), p. 140.
6. Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: The Free Press, 1996).
7. William A. Dembski, *Mere Creation: Science, Faith & Intelligent Design* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 24.
8. Taylor, *In the Minds of Men*, p. 110.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 350.
10. Thomas Burnet, *Sacred Theory of the Earth*, 1681.

11. Robert Hooke, *Micrographia*, 1665.
12. Edward Lhwyd, *Lithophylacii Britannici Ichnographia*, 1699.
13. John Ray, *Three Physico Theological Discourses*, 1693.
14. Nicholas Steno, *Prodromus*, 1669.
15. John Woodward, *Natural History of the Earth*, 1695.
16. Timothy P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), pp. 19-20.
17. Ovid E. Need, Jr., *The Death of the Church Victorious: Tracing the Roots and Implications of Modern Dispensationalism* (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 2004), p. 11.
18. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, p. 24.
19. Ibid., p. 24.
20. John N. Darby, *Collected Works*, 11:156, as quoted in Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, p. 25.

Chapter 6 – *Worlds Collide: Lyell vs. Darby*

1. Morris, *History of Modern Creationism*, p. 38.
2. Scofield Reference Notes (1917) Gen. 1:2
3. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, p. 188.
4. J. Vernon McGee, *Genesis Chapters 1-15*, "Thru the Bible Commentary Series," Volume 1 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), pp. xliii-xliv.
5. Ibid., p. 59.
6. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, p. 189.
7. From Gary North's recorded presentation, *The Scopes Trial and the Great Turning Point: 1925-1975*, delivered at American Vision's 2006 "Creation to Revelation" conference. These recordings are available through www.AmericanVision.org.
8. Available online at: http://www.reasons.org/resources/apologetics/notable_leaders/index.shtml#bryan (2007).
9. Morris, *History of Modern Creationism*, p. 66.
10. Ellen G. White, *Facts of Faith, in Connection with the History of Holy Men of Old* (Battle Creek: Steam Press, 1864), p. 75-76. The full text is available online at <http://egwdatabase.whiteestate.org> under the listing *Spiritual Gifts - Volume 3*, Chapter VIII.
11. Ibid.
12. Ellen G. White, *Education* (1903). The full text is available online at <http://egwdatabase.whiteestate.org> under the listing *Education*, Chapter 14.
13. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, p. 189.

14. Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954) pp. 124-125.
15. Don Stoner, *A New Look at an Old Earth: Resolving the Conflict Between Bible & Science* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1985, 1997), pp.126-127.
16. Henry Morris, *History of Modern Creationism*, p. 79.
17. Ibid., p. 80.
18. Ibid., p. 83.
19. Dr. Hugh Ross, *Creation and Time: A Biblical and Scientific Perspective on the Creation-Date Controversy* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1994), p. 36.
20. Young-earth opponents of dispensationalism continue to imply that dispensational premillennialism is unrelated baggage the majority of young-earth creationists bring to the study of Genesis.
21. Gary North, Letter to ICE subscribers dated May 19, 2001. North explained his criticisms of Morris' views in *Is the World Running Down?: Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988).
22. From Gary North's recorded presentation, *Out of the Shadows: 1976-2006*, delivered at American Vision's 2006 "Creation to Revelation" conference. These recordings are available from www.AmericanVision.org.
23. George McCready Price, "Science and Religion in a Nutshell" (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1923), p. 13 as quoted in Noll, *Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, p. 194.
24. Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists: The Evolution of Scientific Creationism* (New York: Knopf, 1992), p. 339.
25. Michael Ruse, *The Evolution-Creation Struggle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 239.
26. Morris, *Creation and the Second Coming*, pp. 6-7.
27. McGee believed in the gap theory. He rejected evolution and yet had no problem with a millions-of-years-old earth. For example, he writes: "When Adam was told to replenish the earth, we assume that there had been living creatures – I don't know what to call them – before Adam. They apparently were living creatures of God's creation; anything I could say beyond that would be pure speculation." McGee, *Genesis Chapters 1-15*, p. 144. McGee's book is filled with statements like this. The most obvious can be found on pp. xliii, 55-60, 113, and 117.
28. McGee, *Genesis Chapters 1-15*, p. 58.
29. Ibid., pp. 134-135.

30. Ibid., p. 133. On the last page of the book, at the very end of the bibliography, is this note: "For additional material on creation, the Flood, and science, write to: Institute for Creation Research, P.O. Box 2667, El Cajon, California 92021."
31. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, p. 194.
32. Ibid., p. 195.
33. Prophecy guru Tim LaHaye gives a glowing recommendation for this book on the back cover. He says, "This is a well-written, carefully reasoned and easy to understand presentation of an event all Christians should know thoroughly... I could hardly lay it down."
34. Morris, *Creation and the Second Coming*, p. v.
35. Ibid., p. 4.
36. Ibid., p. 183.
37. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, p. 195.

Chapter 7 – *The Great Flood Debate*

1. For an in depth article which explains this common view, see <http://answersingenesis.org/articles/nab/what-happened-to-the-dinosaurs>. The new Creation Museum which opened in 2007, endorsed by all the main young-earth creationist organizations, is based entirely upon these beliefs.
2. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*: Book 1, Chapter 3, Section 6.
3. *Antiquities*: Book 1, Chapter 4, Section 1.
4. *Antiquities*: Book 1, Chapter 3, Section 5.
5. For a representative example see www.answersingenesis.org/docs2/4400arkahoy11-25-2000.asp.
6. *Antiquities*: Book 1, Chapter 3, Section 6.
7. A high elevation landing of the ark presents its own set of difficulties. Did the dove fly from the thin air of 15,000+ ft. down to where olive trees grow and then back up to the ark on top of Mt. Ararat? Did all the breath-based life on earth today descend down a treacherous mountain in thin air and extreme climate conditions? Maybe that explains the extinction of so many species in the fossil record!
8. Lactantius, "The Divine Institutes" in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:94-95. As quoted in Davis A. Young, *Christianity and the Age of the Earth* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Artisan, 1988), p. 18.
9. Augustine, "City of God" in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 2:315-16, as quoted in Davis, *Christianity and the Age of the Earth*, pp. 18-19.
10. James Jordan, *Through New Eyes: Developing a Biblical View of the World* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1988), p. 170.

11. McGee, *Genesis Chapters 1-15*, p. 112. McGee's comment continues: "This is a pattern that will be set in the Book of Genesis." Later in his book McGee draws on this principle with regard to the post-flood genealogies in Genesis 10: "Notice that throughout the Bible God follows this same pattern of giving the rejected line first and saying a word about it, then He drops that subject entirely and does not bring it up again. Finally, He gives the accepted line, the line which is leading to the Lord Jesus Christ" (p.155). McGee has another comment related to this pattern a few pages later: "I'm not going to develop that line [Ham] any further. You see, we are following the pattern set by the Holy Spirit in which He gives the rejected line first and then drops it. We are going to turn now to the line that will lead to Abraham and then to the nation Israel and finally to the coming of Christ into this world. It is this line which we will follow through the Old Testament. God is bidding good-bye to the rest of humanity for the time being..." (pp. 157-158). The natural question that arises is why this would not apply to the flood event which appears in the context of Seth's line *after* the subject of Cain's line (Gen. 4) is dropped.
12. John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), p. 119.
13. Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book 1, Chapter 3, Section 1.
14. Leonard E. Read, "I, Pencil," *The Freeman*, December, 1958, available online at: <http://www.fee.org/pdf/books/I,%20Pencil%202006.pdf>.
15. *Strong's Concordance* #2022.
16. David Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), p. 165.
17. Some young-earth creationists argue that today's mountains did not exist at the time of the flood and suggest that the earth was relatively flat. We will explore the implications of common beliefs regarding a great physical change on planet Earth as a result of a global flood in Chapter 12.
18. Translations that make the total flood depth 15 cubits deep: KJV, first published 1611; YLT, 1898; DARBY, 1890; ASV, 1901; AMP, 1954; NASB 1960; NKJV, 1982; KJ21, 1994. Translations that make the total flood depth the height of the mountains *plus* 15 cubits: NLV, first published in 1969; NIV, 1973; MSG, 1993; CEV, 1995; NLT, 1996; NIRV, 1996; HCSB, 1999; ESV, 2001; NCV, 2005. Source: <http://www.biblegateway.com>.
19. This point is made by Ralph Woodrow in a well-written book defending a local flood, *Noah's Flood, Joshua's Long Day, and Lucifer's Fall: What Really Happened?* (It is available at www.ralphwoodrow.org.)

20. This issue led some geologists in the 19th century to a “successive floods” theory. That is, Noah’s flood is merely the last in a long line of world-wide floods. Eventually, even this theory was abandoned by geologists as unworkable because of further geological discoveries.
21. Henry Morris notes: “If representative dinosaurs were taken on the Ark (presumably young ones), then it is likely that their final extinction is accounted for by the sharp changes in climate after the Flood.” *The Genesis Flood*, p. 280n.
22. John Pye Smith developed many of these arguments in the 1800s. For a look at how evangelical Christians have phrased the problems more recently see: Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954); Ralph Woodrow, *Noah’s Flood, Joshua’s Long Day, and Lucifer’s Fall: What Really Happened?* www.ralphwoodrow.org; David Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006); Davis A. Young, *Creation and the Flood: An Alternative to Flood Geology and Theistic Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977); Arthur Custance, *The Flood: Local or Global* (www.custance.org); Frederick A. Filby, *The Flood Reconsidered* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963).
23. Jordan, *Through New Eyes*, p. 173.
24. Taylor, *In the Minds of Men*, p. 110.
25. Davis A. Young, *Christianity and the Age of the Earth* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Artisan, 1988), pp. 143-44.
26. David Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, p. 160.

Chapter 8 – *The Flood and Prophecy*

1. *Strong’s Concordance* # 776.
2. Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 210. [Archer’s quote references the same “erets” even though there is a slight variation in English spelling.]
3. Samuel M. Frost, *Misplaced Hope: The Origins of First and Second Century Eschatology* (Colorado Springs: Bimillennial Press, 2006), p. 209.
4. Kurt M. Simmons, *The Consummation of the Ages*, p. 145.
5. Ellen G. White, “After the Flood” (1864). The full text is available online at <http://egwdatabase.whiteestate.org> under the listing *Spiritual Gifts - Volume 3*, Chapter VIII (3SG 87.2).
6. Representative examples can be seen in Revelation 1:7; 9:1; 11:6,10; 13:3,14; 14:16; 17:8; 21:1.
7. Gary DeMar, “No Fear of the Text,” located online at: www.preteristarchive.com/PartialPreterism/demar-gary_pp_03.html (2007).

8. Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, p. 166. The Sailhamer quote comes from, John Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996), p. 50.
9. Advocates for this “partial-local” view include Dr. Hugh Ross, Milton Terry, Arthur Custance, and David Snoke.
10. Fazale Rana and Hugh Ross, *Who Was Adam?* (Colorado Springs, Nav-Press, 2005), p. 47.
11. *Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary*, edited by Kenneth L Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), Volume 1, p. 1502.
12. See also Zephaniah 3:8.
13. Herbert C. Leopold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Columbus: The Wartburg Press, 1942), p. 301, as quoted by John C. Whitcomb, Jr. & Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications* (Grand Rapids: Baker, [1961] 1977), p. 2.
14. John C. Whitcomb, Jr. & Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications* (Grand Rapids: Baker, [1961] 1977), pp. 56-57.
15. John Dart, “Up Against Caesar: Jesus and Paul Versus the Empire” available online at: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-128255606.html>.
16. See <http://www.nccbuscc.org/nab/bible/luke/luke2.htm> (footnote 2).
17. For more biblical evidence for this understanding, see Acts 17:7.
18. *Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary: Three Volume Set* (Hendrickson Publishers: Peabody, MA, 1997), Vol. 1, p. 96-97.
19. See also Colossians 1:6 and 1 Timothy 3:16. Most date Colossians late, probably around AD 60-62, and 1 Timothy around AD 63-65.
20. Whitcomb & Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, pp. xvi, xvii, xix.
21. Ken Ham, *The Lie: Evolution* (El Cajon, CA: Creation-Life Publishers, 1987), p. 80.
22. Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), p. 86.
23. Tim LaHaye, *Understanding Bible Prophecy for Yourself* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2001), p. 14.
24. Henry Morris demonstrates the “tunnel vision” his literalism creates in his book, *Scientific Creationism* (San Diego: Master Books, 1974). On p. 252 he writes, “It would almost seem frivolous to try to show that the Bible teaches a worldwide flood. The fact is obvious in the mere reading of Genesis 6-9 and one who does not see it there will hardly be convinced by other reasoning.”

Chapter 9 – *Water and Fire*

1. See Luke 2:25-38. This explains why devout Jews anticipated the arrival of the Messiah around the time of Jesus' birth. The Jews could count.
2. It is important to fully comprehend this pattern of flood comparison in the Old Testament. The Bible *repeatedly* compares national judgments to the flood either linguistically or by allusion. In Chapter 8 we saw the destruction of the Philistines in similar imagery and language in Jeremiah 47:2. We also saw flood allusions to the fall of Judah and Jerusalem (586 BC) in Isaiah 24 and Zephaniah 1. Daniel 9 uses a flood comparison within a prophecy about the future end of Judah and Jerusalem. To these examples we add Nahum 1:8 which alludes to a flood when speaking about Nineveh's destruction. *All* of these national judgments were *local* events.
3. Whitcomb & Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, p. 451.
4. Ham, *The Lie*, p. 127.
5. For example, there is *no mention* of the New Testament comparisons in the following prominent old-earth creationist books: Dr. Hugh Ross, *Creation and Time: A Biblical and Scientific Perspective on the Creation-Date Controversy* (Colorado Spring: NavPress, 1994); Don Stoner, *A New Look at an Old Earth: Resolving the Conflict Between the Bible & Science* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1997); Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954); Davis A. Young, *Christianity & the Age of the Earth* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Artisan, 1982).
6. Josephus also thought in terms of both the flood and Sodom when he spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem. Consider the Josephus passage we cited in Chapter 3: "[A]nd here I cannot but speak my mind, and what the concern I am under dictates to me, and it is this: I suppose, that had the Romans made any longer delay in coming against these villains, that the city would either have been swallowed up by the ground opening upon them, or been *overflowed by water*, or else been destroyed by such *thunder as the country of Sodom perished by*, for it had brought forth a generation of men much more atheistical than were those that suffered such punishments; for by their madness it was that *all the people came to be destroyed* [emphasis ours]." *Wars*, Book 5, Chapter 13, Paragraph 6.
7. Whitcomb & Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, p. 21.
8. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, pp. 169-170. Given this astute observation, we don't understand how this same author can logically include the following statement as a "nonnegotiable" on p. 193: "The Scriptures also indicate that the flood killed every other human except

- those in the ark, so that every person today is descended from one of Noah's sons."
9. Gary DeMar, "*The Great Tribulation: Local or Global?*" Article available online at: <http://www.americanvision.org/articlearchive/10-18-06.asp>.
 10. Gary North, *Millennialism and Social Theory* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990) p. 128.
 11. Revelation identifies first-century Jerusalem as Sodom in Revelation 11:8 (NIV): "Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified."
 12. Some believe the Olivet Discourse refers to different events than what is prophesied in 2 Peter. Given these similarities, it is inconsistent to say the Olivet Discourse is fulfilled in AD 70 and 2 Peter will be fulfilled at the end of the physical world.
 13. Whitcomb & Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, pp. 14-15.
 14. Douglas Wilson, *And It Came to Pass: The Third Annual CEF Symposium: Preterism* (Moscow ID: Canon Press, 1993), p. 32.
 15. David Chilton from "Looking for New Heavens and a New Earth" in *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*, 3rd ed. (Atlanta: American Vision, 1997), p. 485.
 16. James B. Jordan, *The Handwriting on the Wall: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2007), p. 463.
 17. You can see more art by James Robert Kessler or contact him at www.InChristVictorious.com.
 18. *Jamieson-Faussett-Brown Bible Commentary*, Volume 1, p. 107.
 19. Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), p. 146.
 20. Revelation also identifies first-century Jerusalem as Egypt in Revelation 11:8 (NIV): "Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified."
 21. Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, pp. 186-187.
 22. Gary DeMar, "Armageddon, 200 Million Chinese Horse Soldiers, and the Slaughter of Billions." Article available online at: <http://www.americanvision.org/articlearchive2007/09-17-07.asp>.
 23. Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (, p. 169
 24. DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*, 3rd ed., p. 117.
 25. Dr. Thomas Ice in the public debate with Gary DeMar, *The Great Tribulation: Past or Future?* The video of this debate is available from AmericanVision.org. A recording is also available online from Dr. Thomas Ice at: <http://www.pre-trib.org>.

26. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, pp. 65-66.

Chapter 10 – *The Tower of Babel*

1. See <http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v24/i3/babel.asp>.
2. Morris, *Creation and the Second Coming*, p. 91.
3. See <http://www.icr.org/index.php?module=articles&action=view&page=363>.
4. The notable exception is James B. Jordan's exposition of Babel in *The Handwriting on the Wall*, pp. 87-102. Jordan claims that the story of Babel in Genesis 11:2-9 took place within a *covenant*, not *universal* context (p. 89). He then goes on to suggest that "the Babel project is a new ark..." (p. 93). Consider the odd combination. Jordan believes Babel took place in a covenant context, but insists that the flood before it was universal – Jordan teaches a global flood. In other words Jordan shifts from a universal flood in Genesis 5-9 to a covenant Babel in Genesis 11:2-9. This appears to be a highly problematic and inconsistent view of the flood and Babel. How can a covenant view of Babel, which is essentially a "new ark" be consistent with a universal view of the flood?
5. *A Child's History of the World*, V.M. Hillyer, revised by Edward G. Huey, (Baltimore: Calvert School, [1897] 1997) p. 49.
6. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 1, Chapter 4, Section 2-3.
7. See <http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v24/i3/babel.asp> and <http://www.icr.org/index.php?module=articles&action=view&page=1122>.
8. See http://www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/faq/dont_use.asp.
9. McGee, *Genesis Chapters 1-15*, p. 117.
10. Genesis 14:14 states that Abram had 318 fighting men born in his household. This implies at least 3000 people in Abram's household. See Gary North, *Moses & Pharaoh: Dominion Religion Versus Power Religion* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985), p 19.
11. For a table of comparisons between the Masoretic and Septuagint texts, see the chart at <http://www.answersingenesis.org/tj/v12/i1/chronology.asp#f18>.
12. See http://www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/faq/dont_use.asp.
13. Whitcomb & Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, p. 477.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 483.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 489.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 478.
17. See <http://www.reasons.org/resources/faf/96q3faf/brokntie.shtml>.

18. Though the precise dates are hard to pin down, it is interesting to note that sometime before 2000 BC Akkadian, the parent language to Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, and several other languages, divided into separate recognizable languages. Perhaps Babel relates to this linguistic split? Sumerian, the other dominant language of Mesopotamia, died out shortly after this split.
19. Gary DeMar in public debate with Dr. Thomas Ice, *The Great Tribulation: Past or Future?* The video of this debate is available from AmericanVision.org. A recording is also available online at: <http://www.pre-trib.org>.
20. Preston, *The Elements Shall Melt With Fervent Heat*, pp. 236-237.

Chapter 11 – *God's Curse on Adam: The Problem*

1. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, p. 195.
2. A biological view of the fall and God's curse is a central theme in the new Creation Museum built by the young-earth creationist organization *Answers in Genesis*.
3. Whitcomb & Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, p. 454.
4. Carl Wieland, *Stones and Bones: Powerful Evidence Against Evolution* (Green Forest, AZ: Master Books, 1996), p. 10.
5. Whitcomb & Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, pp. 454-455.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 466.
7. Jordan, *Creation in Six Days*, p. 124.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.
9. Morris, *Creation and the Second Coming*, p. 133.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
15. J. Ligon Duncan III & David W. Hall, *The Genesis Debate: Three views on the Days of Creation* ed. by David G. Hagopian (Mission Viejo: Crux Press, 2001), p. 30.
16. Ross & Archer, *The Genesis Debate*, p. 127.
17. One example often presented by young-earth creationists is our experience of rapid variation in the modern world with domesticated plants and animals. But variation is minor change. It also happens under the direct control and supervision of human direction. Breeders intervene purposely to accomplish a specific variation. Extreme variation does not happen "all by itself" in the wild as is necessary after a global flood.
18. See <http://www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/RE2/chapter4.asp>.

19. Ruse, *The Evolution-Creation Struggle*, p. 239.
20. Whitcomb & Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, p. 80.
21. Apparently, those “high mountains” in Genesis 7 were merely hills after all if the mountains we know today were formed by the flood! Of course, those who argue for a local flood claim this is precisely what the flood account references – these are “hills,” specifically in Mesopotamia.
22. A similar problem is the feasibility of a full complement of biological life on the ark. The fewer animals young-earth creationists suggest were on the ark in order to make space for and care of the animals by Noah appear possible, the more evolution becomes necessary to produce the wide biological life we witness today.
23. See <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/am/v1/n1/intelligent-design-movement>.
24. It might be argued that God entirely re-created the universe after the fall. Realize that the Bible says nothing about this supposed “re-creation” after the original creation week – the suggestion is mere conjecture.
25. Gary North, *The Dominion Covenant: Genesis* (Tyler: Institute for Christian Economics, 1982), p. 254. We should note that this book is dedicated to Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb, Jr.
26. Ross & Archer, *The Genesis Debate*, p. 202.
27. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, p. 48.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
29. Ross, *Creation and Time*, p. 69.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
31. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, p. 55.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
36. Morris, *Creation and the Second Coming*, p. 132.
37. North, *The Dominion Covenant*, p. 254.
38. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, p. 62.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

Chapter 12 – God’s Curse on Adam: The Solution

1. Ross & Archer, *The Genesis Debate*, p. 132.
2. No mention of Jacob’s ladder in Genesis would be complete without reference to what Jesus claimed in John 1:51 NKJV: “And He said to

him, 'Most assuredly I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'" Jesus saw himself as the ladder between earth and heaven; God's angels (messengers) ascend and descend through Jesus Christ.

3. For a biblical and philosophical masterpiece on this subject, see Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997).
4. Eric Rauch, "A Flood of Consistency," published in American Vision's *Biblical Worldview Magazine*, August 2006, Volume 22, Number 8. Available online at: <http://www.americanvision.org/articlearchive/07-07-06.asp>.
5. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, section 37. Available at <http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/history/ath-inc.htm>.
6. Augustine, Sermon 233.3-4. Selections available online at: http://www.preteristarchive.com/StudyArchive/a/augustine_amilennial.html.
7. Ken Ham, "The god of an Old Earth" available online at: <http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v21/i4/oldearth.asp>.
8. Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, p. 233.
9. Ibid., p. 233.
10. Albertus Pieters, *Notes on Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), p. 57 as quoted by Whitcomb & Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, p. 468.
11. Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, p. 32.
12. This second observation comes from John Noe in a fascinating lecture at the 2006 Prophecy Conference titled "The Origin of Evil," available from World Lighthouse Productions at: www.thevoiceofreasonlive.com.
13. C.S. Lewis, *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*.
14. Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, p. 29.
15. Jordan, *Through New Eyes*, p. 30.
16. Ken Ham, "The god of an Old Earth" available online at: <http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v21/i4/oldearth.asp>.
17. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *I Am an Impure Thinker* (Norwich, VT: Argo, 1970), p. 44.
18. God demonstrated his justice by drowning the male-children of Egypt, Pharaoh's army, in the Red Sea. See Peter Leithart, "Eye for an Eye, Water for Water" available online at: <http://www.leithart.com/archives/001516.php>. Also, John Sailhamer, "Thus we see in these texts [Ex. 14-15] that God did to the Egyptians that which they had done to Israel." *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, p. 271.
19. David Chilton, *Paradise Restored: A Biblical Theology of Dominion* (Ft. Worth: Dominion Press, 1985), p. 57.
20. Ibid., p. 25.

21. This passage proves something else, too. It proves the ostrich's environment is *the same* before the fall of Adam as it is now. Ostriches still lay their eggs in the warm sand. There is no radical change in the physical world between us and the original creation of the world. Also consider that Job 39-41 provides an extended discussion on what the creation teaches about God. All the animals in those chapters bear *direct* resemblance to the world we witness today. It was all made that way for a divine purpose, and that makes it all good – just as it is.
22. Ken Ham, "The god of an Old Earth" available online at: <http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v21/i4/oldearth.asp>.
23. Of course, this is a theoretical impossibility. If Jesus had not gone to the cross, then he would have failed to do God's will which is sin. The same issue can be demonstrated by asking this question: Did Jesus age? Young-earth creationists often suggest that the aging process began at the fall and is a result of the curse on Adam's sin. But Jesus never sinned and still aged! This demonstrates that the aging process, like biological death, is a part of God's original creation. How can God's children "grow up" in Christ if the aging process, i.e., maturation, is inherently alien to God's original creation?
24. For an introductory look at the issue of biological death and covenantal jurisdiction in the ministry of Christ, see Don K. Preston, "Was Jesus Born Again?" available online at: http://www.eschatology.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=470&Itemid=61.
25. Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), p. 63.
26. John Eldridge, *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul* (Nashville: John Nelson Publishers, 2001), p. 30.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
30. We suggest that it is significant that the first description John gives of the kind of people who receive the "second death" in Revelation 21:8 is "cowardly." The new world John describes in Revelation 21 has a promise of death, just like the world Adam inherited.
31. Peter Leithart, "Adam and the Dragon" available online at: <http://www.leithart.com/archives/000447.php>
32. It is important to note that the pre-flood world divided between these two occupational categories. We see them clearly with Cain (farmer) and Abel (shepherd). This suggests that shepherding sheep and livestock for food was common *before* the flood. In fact, this division begins a theme which runs through the Bible depicting the godly leaders

of the covenant people as shepherds. Abel was a shepherd, Abraham was a shepherd, Isaac was a shepherd, Jacob and his families were shepherds, Moses was a shepherd, David was a shepherd – all of which set the scene for Jesus Christ, the good shepherd. A radical change in the world at the flood cannot be reconciled with this uniform pattern of shepherding sheep, from Abel to David and beyond. Wouldn't the fact that Abel shepherded sheep before the flood demonstrate that he lived in the same physical world as the patriarchs after the flood?

33. Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 85.
34. Ibid., p. 86.
35. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, section 9. Available at <http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/history/ath-inc.htm>.
36. Ibid., section 27.
37. St. Augustine, Sermons, 261; trans. by Henry Bettenson, ed., *The Later Christian Fathers: A Selection From the Writings of the Fathers from St. Cyril of Jerusalem to St. Leo the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 222.
38. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, p. 64.
39. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 56.
40. Eric Rauch, "A Flood of Consistency," published in American Vision's *Biblical Worldview Magazine*, August 2006, Volume 22, Number 8, p.15. This article references Tim Martin due to the arguments of a previous edition of *Beyond Creation Science*. Available online at: <http://www.americanvision.org/articlearchive/07-07-06.asp>.
41. Whitcomb & Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, p. 459.
42. Don K. Preston, "Question on Romans 8 and the Redemption of the Body." Available online at: http://www.eschatology.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=574&Itemid=92.
43. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, pp. 73-74.

Chapter 13 – *The Great Creation Debate*

1. Ham, *The Lie*, p. 152-153.
2. Jordan, *Creation in Six Days*, p. 172n. Notice how the argument Jordan uses assumes that human abilities and human ways of life are the same in our day as they have been since the days of Adam. Jordan makes an argument based on uniformitarian views of human culture.
3. For a full examination of the original authorship and early date for Genesis see, P.J. Wiseman, *Ancient Records and the Structure of Genesis* (Nashville: Nelson, 1985).
4. Jordan, *Creation in Six Days*, p. 35.

5. Ibid., p. 141.
6. Stoner, *A New Look at an Old Earth*, p. 18.
7. Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, p. 153.
8. Whitcomb & Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, p. 41.
9. Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge: Judson Press [1907], 1985), p. 223.
10. *Jamieson-Faussett-Brown Bible Commentary*, Volume 1, p. 96.
11. Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, p. 45.
12. Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, p. 28.
13. Terry writes, "[T]he discoveries of science have effectually exploded the old notion of the creation of earth and heavens in six ordinary days." Terry continues by saying these discoveries have provided "well-ascertained facts of geology and astronomy." Notice that Terry had a positive view of scientific advance and discovery unlike young-earth creationists who tend to view modern science through their pessimistic, premillennial philosophy of history which sees predestined apostasy in the "last days." *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 40.
14. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 39.
15. Austin Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images*, p. 19 as quoted in Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, p. 34.
16. Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, pp. 30-31.
17. Ham, *The Lie*, p. 163.
18. We suspect this arbitrary standard is the result of a natural reaction to liberals who claim Genesis is merely "myth." If we are right, then the standard that young-earth creationism uses to interpret the early chapters of Genesis is reactionary: it is not based on biblical reasoning.
19. Conrad Hyers, *The Meaning of Creation: Genesis and Modern Science* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984), p. 27.
20. Henry Morris, *Acts and Facts*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research, 2006), p. b. Also available online at <http://www.icr.org/index.php?module=articles&action=view&ID=2604>.
21. Samuel M. Frost, *Misplaced Hope*, p. 29.
22. Hyers, *The Meaning of Creation*, pp. 19-20.
23. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1952) p. 145.
24. Hyers, *The Meaning of Creation*, p. 10.
25. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 1, Chapter 1, Section 1.
26. Young, *Christianity and the Age of the Earth*, p. 20.
27. For more information on Church history and the interpretation of Genesis 1 see, *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation*, edited by David G. Hagopian (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press, 2001) and

- Hugh Ross, *Creation and Time: A Biblical and Scientific Perspective on the Creation-Date Controversy* (Colo. Springs: NavPress, 1994).
28. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Book 5, Chapter 2.
 29. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 40.
 30. Morris, *History of Modern Creationism*, p. 37.
 31. *What Martin Luther Says: A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1986), p. 1523.
 32. James Jordan, "John Sailhamer Weighs In, Part 1," *Biblical Chronology Newsletter*, April, 1997, Vol. 9, No. 4. Available online at: <http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-chronology/9-4-john-sailhamer-weights-in-part-1/>.
 33. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 43.
 34. Ibid., p. 43.
 35. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, p. 145.
 36. Philip Carrington, *The Meaning of Revelation* (London: SPCK, 1931), p. 136.
 37. Origen, *Origen on First Principles*, Book 6, Chapter 3 as quoted in Hugh Ross, *Creation and Time*, p. 19.
 38. Jordan, *Creation in Six Days*, p. 28.
 39. Ibid., p. 150.
 40. Dick Fischer, *The Origins Solution: An Answer in the Creation-Evolution Debate* (Lima, OH: Fairway Press, 1996).
 41. Francis A. Shaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time; The Flow of Biblical History* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1972), p. 59.
 42. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, p. 151.
 43. Ross, *Creation and Time*, p. 52.

Chapter 14 – Covenant Creation

1. Craig C. Hill, *In God's Time: The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), p. 9.
2. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 56.
3. Morris, *History of Modern Creationism*, p. 96.
4. John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), p. 37.
5. Ibid., p. 38.
6. Duncan & Hall, *The Genesis Debate*, p. 30.
7. Ross & Archer, *The Genesis Debate*, p. 123.
8. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 43n.
9. Hyers, *The Meaning of Creation*, p. 102.
10. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 43.
11. Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, p. 28.

12. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Book 5, Chapter 2.
13. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 44.
14. Ibid., p. 39.
15. Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, p. 29.
16. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 43.
17. Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, p. 26.
18. Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, pp. 25-27.
19. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, pp. 6-7.
20. Ibid., p. 483.
21. Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, p. 11.
22. Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Prophecies of St. Paul," in *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968), p. 470 as quoted in Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, p. 27.
23. Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, pp. 149-150.
24. James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive and Readable Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1986), p. 162.
25. Simmons, *The Consummation of the Ages*, p. 30.
26. J.H. Kurtz, *The Bible and Astronomy* [1857] as quoted in Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, p. 152.
27. Matheson, 1889, as quoted by Milton Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 44.
28. Frederic W. Farrar, *The Bible: Its Meaning and Supremacy* [1897], pp. 242-243 as quoted by Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 50.
29. Davis, *Paradise to Prison*, p. 37.
30. Ernst Kasemann, as quoted by Eugene H. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), p. 40.
31. The same principle applies in Revelation when John references ancient Roman warfare, tactics, weapons, and strategy. If you know the history, then you can date Revelation as contemporary to the Roman Empire from the internal evidence.
32. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 39.

Chapter 15 – The Prophetic Creation

1. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 57.
2. Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, p. 45.
3. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 21.
4. bid., p. 43.
5. Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, p. 573.
6. Chilton, *Paradise Restored*, p. 134.

7. Special thanks to Timothy King (no relation to Max King) who originally pointed out this connection to us. He can be contacted at <http://www.restorationgj.com>. For a discussion on the elements found in the creation week of John 1, see David Chilton, *Paradise Restored*, p. 62. Following Chilton's highly suggestive comment we suggest that there is an order to John's week that also matches covenant history. Day 1 is the beginning. The water baptism on Day 2 correlates to the flood. The Lamb of God on Day 3 matches the passover and time of the exodus. The pronouncement of the King of Israel on Day 4 hearkens back to the time of David and Solomon. All of these "days" are preparatory for the end goal of God's work, God's final dwelling place with his people (Rev. 21:3).
8. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, p. 107.
9. Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, p. 196.
10. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 44.
11. Lee Irons & Meredith Kline, *The Genesis Debate: Three views on the Days of Creation* ed. by David G. Hagopian (Mission Viejo: Crux Press, 2001), p. 282.
12. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, p. 108.
13. Elton Trueblood, *A Place to Stand* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 43.
14. Special thanks to Bo Stuart for this insight.
15. Beka Horton, *Church History and Things to Come* (Pensacola: Pensacola Christian College), p. 251.
16. Hugh Ross, *Beyond the Cosmos* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1996), p. 61.
17. Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, p. 97.
18. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 46.
19. Irons & Kline, *The Genesis Debate*, p. 283.
20. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 55.
21. Many mistakenly read the curse on Eve as the *introduction* of pain in childbirth and the curse on Adam as the *introduction* of work. The truth is that man worked in God's garden *before* the fall; the curse made him work "by the sweat of his brow." Similarly, pain in childbirth existed *before* the fall, because the curse is said to "greatly increase" the pain of childbirth. Both of these elements in the creation account are symbolic of life apart from God.
22. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, pp. 52-53.
23. See sermon titled "The Sacrifice and the Garden" from *God's Garden* sermon series by Tim Martin available online at: <http://www.truthin-living.org/index.php?pr=SerGRD>.
24. Jordan, *Through New Eyes*, p. 174.

25. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypitics*, p. 66.
26. M. M. Kalisch, *Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, et al., 1858), pp. 209-210 as quoted in Whitcomb and Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, p. 57. Note the date on the original citation. It shows that a local flood view was common in 1858; a local-flood view is not a 20th century innovation.
27. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypitics*, p. 63.
28. Ibid., p. 49.

Chapter 16 – *Apocalyptic life-Spans*

1. Some old-earth creationist “literalists” ignore this problem altogether. One example is David Snoke’s *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*. The book contains over 200 pages of arguments that Adam’s world is “our world,” yet there is not a single reference to the long life-spans found in the early chapters of Genesis!
2. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypitics*, p. 20.
3. Bits of symbolic numerology live on in our modern world. It explains why hotels and high-rise buildings often have no thirteenth floor and why so many dread “Friday the thirteenth.” Also certain ages have certain social significance. The authors are both 21 years of age and have been for years!
4. Jordan, *Through New Eyes*, p. 14.
5. Davis, *Paradise to Prison*, p. 105.
6. Douglas Wilson, “Regeneration,” *Credenda Agenda*, Various Visions of Federal, Volume 19, Number 3, p. 24.
7. This is another way in which the early chapters of Genesis are linked to the final chapters of Revelation. The last chapters of Revelation speak in terms of *covenant* life and death just like the first chapters of Genesis. Genesis and Revelation match.
8. Duane L. Christensen, *The Genesis Debate: Persistent Questions about Creation and the Flood*, edited by Ronald F. Youngblood (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), p. 167.
9. It is conceivable that Noah had some unfaithful children which Genesis does not mention. But this seems highly unlikely given the pattern of household salvation emphasized by the account. Also, it is out of character for the Scriptures to omit reference to evil within the families of the righteous. Consider what Genesis records about Ham immediately after the flood! The Scriptures record only three sons of Noah because that is all he had. His family is a normal family. The life-span is symbolic.
10. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypitics*, p. 62.

11. Ed Stevens, in response to the question: "Do you think that Isaiah 65-66 and Revelation 20-22 are parallel passages?" Full comments available online at: http://www.preteristarchive.com/StudyArchive/s/stevens-ed_preterist-rapture.html.
12. James Jordan, "Genesis 5 & 11: Chronological-Theological Reflections (Part 2)," *Biblical Chronology Newsletter*, Volume 6, Number 11, November 1994. Available online at: http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-chronology/6_11/.
13. Jordan, *Creation in Six Days*, p. 91.

Chapter 17 – *The Covenant Gospel of Jesus Christ*

1. Jordan, *Through New Eyes*, p. 58.
2. Jordan speaks about astral allusions in early Genesis and the numerology of the long life-spans in "Genesis 5 & 11: Chronological-Theological Reflections (Part 2)," *Biblical Chronology Newsletter*, Volume 6, Number 11, November 1994. Available online at: http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-chronology/6_11/.
3. The three promises of Abraham regarding his offspring mirror the three elements of creation – heaven (stars), earth (dust), and sea (sand). These three aspects are an essential part of the architecture of the temple. Given the predominant symbolic association between "sea" and "Gentiles" throughout the rest of Scripture, this third promise to Abraham is likely prophetic of the Gentiles becoming children of Abraham *as Gentiles*, a key point of controversy in the New Testament. To better understand how Gentiles relate to the sea, especially in New Testament imagery related to fish and fishermen, see James Jordan, "153 Large Fish," *Biblical Horizons Newsletter*, Number 133, available online at: <http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-horizons/no-133-153-large-fish>.
4. Our culture still uses this style of communication in a slightly different way. We call some particular brilliant individual a "bright light." Talented athletes are called "stars." We also have "movie-stars." They each have a star with their own name in Hollywood, California. Or consider the title of a current television series called *Dancing with the Stars*. Few realize that the Bible's culture used the same terminology ordered around different priorities and values than our own culture. Symbolism is universal.
5. See Psalm 147:1-4.
6. Thanks to Jack Scott for these parallels which are not exhaustive of his list. Jack has pointed out eighteen direct parallels between 2 Peter 2-3 and the book of Jude.

7. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypitics*, p. 479.
8. Gary DeMar, "Armageddon, 200 Million Chinese Horse Soldiers, and the Slaughter of Billions" available online at: <http://www.americanvision.org/articlearchive2007/09-17-07.asp>.
9. See Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, pp. 540-541.
10. Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, p. 320.
11. The story of Israel is parallel to the story of Adam who was made in the wilderness and then placed in the garden of Eden. Like Adam, Israel was formed in the wilderness and then led into the promised land (like the garden of Eden – Gen. 13:10). This theme is repeated in the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus spent his childhood in Egypt (wilderness) and then he ministered across the promised land (garden). The point of this history would be plain to devout Jews. Jesus is both the last Adam and true Israel – "Out of Egypt I called my Son" (Matt. 2:15 NIV).
12. Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, p. 541.
13. Don K. Preston, "Was Jesus Born Again?" available online at: http://www.eschatology.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=470&Itemid=61.
14. These boundaries no longer applied when Jesus sent them out a second time, after his resurrection.
15. Few realize the clear distinction between Grecian and Hebraic Jews during the time of Christ. The Grecian Jews grew up and lived in various parts of the Roman Empire while Hebraic Jews dwelled in Israel. You can imagine how these different cultures would create distinct ways in which the Jews would view the world. For a biblical example of the friction these parallel cultures generated, see Acts 6:1.
16. Gary DeMar, "Using the Wrong Text to Make a Point" available online at: <http://www.americanvision.org/articlearchive2007/08-21-07.asp>.
17. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, p. 169.
18. Don K. Preston, "Was Jesus Born Again?" available online at: http://www.eschatology.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=470&Itemid=61.
19. For an introduction to the Old Testament background and covenant context of the Sermon on the Mount, see the *Sermon on the Mount* sermon series by Bo Stuart available online at: <http://www.truthinliving.org/index.php?pr=SerSOM>.
20. Jesus expounded on Psalm 37:11, 27, 29-34.
21. For a full exposition of the context of the book of Galatians see the *Galatians* sermon series by Bo Stuart, available online at: <http://www.truthinliving.org/index.php?pr=SerGAL>.

22. Douglas Wilson, "Can a Nature/Grace Dualism be Born Again?" *Credenda Agenda*, Various Visions of Federal, Volume 19, Number 3, p. 22.

Chapter 18 – *The Big Picture*

1. *Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary*, edited by Kenneth L Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III, Volume 2, p. 1224.
2. Preston, *The Elements Shall Melt*, p. 130.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
4. Kurt M. Simmons, *The Consummation of the Ages*, pp. 397-398.
5. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 460.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
7. Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, p. 556.
8. For a fuller explanation see "Who IS Israel?" by Sandy Elders. Available online at: <http://newjerusalemcommunity.net/?c=53&a=1925>.
9. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, p. 52.
10. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, p. 103.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
13. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 460.
14. Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1954), pp. 72-73.
15. A fuller discussion of this view is available as an e-book titled *The Creation in Romans 8:18-23* by William Bell. Available online at: <http://www.lastdays-eschatology.net/eschatology-ebooks.html>.
16. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, p. 151.
17. Preston, *The Elements Shall Melt*, p. 130.
18. The New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 is portrayed as a treasure city that is made out of gold, precious stones, and pearls (Rev. 21:18-21). It is interesting to note that the limited treasure mentioned in the original garden was gold and precious stones (Gen.2:12) which are derived from mining the land. At the end of the story, God is presented as "showing off" the copious size and extreme variety of his treasure city, the people of God; and this city now contains precious things mined from the sea – pearls. See sermon titled "God's Treasure" in the *God's Garden* sermon series by Tim Martin, available online at: <http://www.truthinliving.org/index.php?pr=SerGRD>.

Chapter 19 – *The Test of Truth*

1. Davis, *Paradise to Prison*, p. 56.

2. This is evidence of the fact that all the New Testament had been written before the destruction of Jerusalem.
3. See Don K. Preston, *Who is this Babylon?* (Ardmore, OK: JaDon Productions, LLC, 2006), pp. 204–205, for a fuller exposition of how futurism negates the clear test of a prophet demanded by the Law.
4. Frost, *Misplaced Hope*, pp. 228–229.
5. Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?: The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1976), p. 132.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
7. Gary DeMar, “A Great Cloud of Scientific Witnesses,” *Biblical Worldview Magazine*, Volume 23, Number 10 & 11, October/November 2007, p. 14.
8. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?*, p. 142.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 130–131.
11. Samuel M. Frost, “Jesus’ Body: Super Body or Same Body?” Available online at: http://www.thereignofchrist.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=150&Itemid=48.
12. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?*, p. 131.
13. Gary DeMar, “It Started With Aristotle,” *Biblical Worldview Magazine*, Volume 23, Number 2, February 2007, p. 22. Also available online at: <http://www.americanvision.org/bwarchive/2-07%20Aristotle.pdf>.
14. J.N. Larned, *The New Larned History* (Springfield, MA: C.A. Nichols Publishing, 1922), Vol. 1, p. 576.
15. Stoner, *A New Look at an Old Earth*, pp. 34–35.
16. These technological blessings can become curses if used apart from God’s purposes. For example, nuclear technology can be used to generate power for millions of people or it can be used as a destructive weapon which can kill millions of people at once. The difference lies in the purpose to which the technology is applied.
17. As quoted by Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 222.
18. Gary Demar, “Questioning History – Part 2” available online at: <http://www.americanvision.org/articlearchive2007/11-06-07.asp>.
19. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, Chapter 1, Section 16. Available online at: http://www.ccel.org/c/calvin/comment3/comm_vol01/htm/vii.htm.
20. There is still a small band of geocentrists who stand by their reading of Joshua 10 and the ancient teachings of the Church on the matter. Not surprisingly, they are dedicated advocates of young-earth creationism.

21. St. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Book 1, Chapter 19, Section 39.
22. The same can be said about the virgin birth of Jesus.
23. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd Ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 114.
24. Biblical judgments carry out the sentence immediately, not after a delay of, say, 930 years!
25. Stoner, *A New Look at an Old Earth*, p. 36.
26. Hyers, *The Meaning of Creation*, p. 34.

Chapter 20 – *The Case for Prophecy Fulfilled*

1. Gary Demar, “Questioning History – Part 2” available online at: <http://www.americanvision.org/articlearchive2007/11-06-07.asp>.
2. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 8.
3. Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, p. 581.
4. “Beyond Salvation” by Timothy R. King available online at: <http://www.presence.tv/cms/beyondsalvation.php> (editorial note).
5. “Comprehensive Grace” by Timothy R. King available online at <http://www.presence.tv/cms/compgrace.shtml>.
6. Jordan, *Creation in Six Days*, p. 124.
7. *Jamieson-Faussett-Brown Bible Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson [1868] 1997), Vol. 1, p. 49.
8. For a full presentation see “God’s Garden” sermon series by Tim Martin available at <http://www.truthinliving.org/index.php?pr=SerGRD>.
9. Special thanks to Mark Chiacchira for this insight.
10. Our physical world produces freedom for all of God’s creatures because of the reliability of physical laws which govern the universe. Without law there can be no life, let alone freedom!
11. Many assume that Adam would have suffered this death sentence if he committed *any* sin in God’s garden. The text does not say this. That belief is smuggled into the text because of questionable theological preconceptions. Is it really the case that the original story of God and his first son (Luke 3:38) portrays a scene where a vindictive God the Father sets out to get Adam the son from the very beginning? Did God lie in wait for Adam to make just one mistake so that God could then jubilantly toss him out of the garden? Does God treat his children in this manner today? This has *never* been the case. The widely-held view of the original garden scene borders on the absurd from any objective reading of Genesis 2-3. Adam was given free grace after free grace. First he was given life – unmerited grace. Then he was given a beautiful place to live – unmerited grace. Then he was given a beautiful wife

(with no bride-price required) – again unmerited grace. The text says that *one particular sin* would lead to death, nothing more. Genesis 2-3 should be read as the Father-son story it truly is, and a story that matches what Jesus taught in Matthew 12:32. The apostles taught the same thing in places such as 1 John 5:16-17; Romans 8:13-16; and Hebrews 10:26-31.

12. Adam, God's son, was called to reflect the personality of God the Father and bear the family image in his own work. Adam was called to tend the garden – his own life – by banishing sin and evil from his own presence just like God does. Adam had work to do in God's garden – gospel work.
13. Some might say that a single covenant view of the Bible contradicts the fact that the Bible clearly teaches about covenants (plural). Perhaps this is not a contradiction at all. The way the Bible communicates “the covenant” (singular) and “covenants” (plural) may be a reflection of God's Trinitarian nature. There is both “the covenant” and “covenants” in Scripture: unity and diversity. Should we expect anything less from our God who is both one and many?
14. A similar single-covenant view of the Bible was championed by the sixteenth-century theologian by the name of Heinrich Bullinger who wrote a treatise in 1534 titled, *A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Covenant of God*. See Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991). For a modern theological investigation, see Max H. Sotak, “A Worm in the Apple: How the Merit Principle Compromises Covenant Theology” available online at: http://www.truthinliving.org/index.php?pr=The_Reformer.
15. Again, this spiritual truth provides evidence that God's physical creation does not change in any radical way. The predictability of the creation is a reflection of our immutable God. Creation is reliable no matter how far we look into the past precisely because of the fact that God is reliable. The physical universe reflects God's covenant order.
16. This again demonstrates that the transition from old to new covenant is not one from “law” to “grace.” Law is present in the new covenant (James 2:8) as surely as grace is present in the old (Gen. 6:8; Ex. 33:12-17). The change has to do with the *maturation* of God's people. The external observance of the new covenant may look different than the external observance of the old because God's people in Christ have come of age: they are now grown-ups “in Christ” rather than school-children “in Moses” (Gal. 3:24-25).

17. See Don K. Preston, *Like Father, Like Son, On Clouds of Glory* (JaDon ProductionsLLC: Ardmore, OK, 2006).
18. The “trumpet call of God” may also relate to the dedication of Solomon’s temple. Few consider that the “trumpet call of God” referenced in the New Testament has deep roots in the Law and Old Testament prophecy. For a full presentation see the sermon titled “God’s Silver Trumpets” in the *Wild Things* sermon series by Tim Martin available at: <http://www.truthinliving.org/index.php?pr=SerWT>
19. Thanks to Randy Sommer for this insight.
20. St. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, p. 97 (Book 3, Chapter 11, 1st paragraph).
21. St. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, pp. 204-205 (Book 6, Chapter 25).
22. Jordan, *The Handwriting on the Wall*, pp. 616-618.
23. Gary DeMar, “Matthew 24 and 25: How Many Comings?” (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 1994), *Biblical Worldview Magazine*, Vol. 10, Number 7, p.12.
24. Matt. 17:12, 22; 20:22; Luke 9:31, 44; 10:1; John 6:15; Acts 3:3; 12:6; 16:27; 18:14; 21:37; 27:33; Rev. 2:10; 10:4. Examples where “mello” exists in Greek but does not get translated in many versions: Matt. 3:7; 12:32; Rom. 8:18; Eph. 1:21; Col. 2:17; Heb. 13:14; Rev. 1:19; 12:5)
25. For more on this issue see Preston, *The Elements Shall Melt*, pp. 121-123.
26. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), p. 170.
27. Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, p. 525.
28. Don K. Preston, *Who is this Babylon?* (Ardmore, OK: JaDon Productions, LLC, 2006), p. 266.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 267.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 268-269.
31. David Chilton, Oklahoma City Prophecy Conference, 1997.
32. McGee, *Genesis Chapters 1-15*, p. xii.
33. J. Gresham Machen, *Contemporary American Theology* (New York: Round Table Press, 1932), pp. 269-270.

Chapter 21 – Christian Worldview

1. Eugene H. Peterson, *Leap Over a Wall: Earthy Spirituality for Everyday Christians* (San Francisco: Harper, 1997), p. 27.
2. St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, section 1. Available online at www.ccel.org/ccel/athanasius/incarnation.html.
3. Some believe the Bible teaches that after the second coming there will be no marriage. This is based on an erroneous reading of Matthew

- 22:30, Mark 12:25, and Luke 20:34-35. For a contextual understanding of what Jesus taught about marriage and the resurrection see the sermon titled, "Levirite Marriage" by Tim Martin in the *Wild Things of Scripture* sermon series available online at: <http://www.truthinliving.org/index.php?pr=SerWT>.
4. Jonathon Sarfati, "The Earth's Magnetic Field: Evidence that the Earth is Young," available online at: <http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v20/i2/magnetic.asp>.
 5. D. Russel Humphreys, "The Earth's Magnetic Field is Young" available online at: <http://www.icr.org/article/371>.
 6. Taylor, *In the Minds of Men*, p. 332.
 7. North, *Millennialism and Social Theory*, pp. 127-154.
 8. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, p. 48.
 9. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
 10. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 451.
 11. *Ibid.*, p. 481.
 12. This basic point makes "creedal objections" to preterism as irrelevant as we have treated them in this book. Every appeal to Church tradition or creed assumes that we live at the end of Church history, not the beginning. Christians are still in the very early formative years of Church history. Let us talk about Church tradition and creeds after a few hundred thousand or a couple million years of Church history. The Bible is plenty for now.
 13. Eugene H. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), pp. 47-48.
 14. The following parallels are taken from Don K. Preston, *Into All the World: Then Comes the End* (www.eschatology.org, 1996).
 15. Don K. Preston, *Into All the World: Then Comes the End* (www.eschatology.org, 1996) p. 4.
 16. Some young-earth leaders view their own ministry as an essential part of fulfilling the Great Commission. See Ken Ham, "This gospel... Will be Preached in All the World," August 17, 2007. Available online at: <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/2007/08/13/this-gospel-will-be-preached>. Ham confidently states, "The remarkable international media buzz surrounding the opening of the Creation Museum on May 28 [2007] reminded me of the verse above from Matthew 24. In many ways, reporting by the secular and Christian media (from around the world) has certainly greatly contributed to seeing the gospel 'preached in all the world.'"
 17. No Greater Joy Ministries (www.nogreaterjoy.org), "Special Edition: Reaching the Lost and Persecuted," December, 2006, p. 3.

18. Ibid., p. 3.
19. Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1957), p. 360.
20. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics*, p. 478.
21. Preston, *The Elements Shall Melt*, p. 118.
22. Gordon J. Spykman, *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 527-528.
23. Don K. Preston, *The Elements Shall Melt*, p. 119.
24. R.C. Sproul, *And It Came to Pass*, pp. v-vi.
25. Ibid., p. vi.
26. Many take the easy way out by saying that we just can't know the truth "until the Lord comes back." For those who think this way, futurism leads to lethargic sloth and undercuts the motive to study God's Word for understanding. Why bother if we can only know the truth at the end of the world?

Appendix A – The Significance of Hermeneutics

1. We do not deny modern English translations vary from one another. The differences we refer to in this appendix are systemic ways of handling the Bible. They are not sporadic variation among English translations.
2. Whitcomb & Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, pp. xvi, xvii, xix.
3. Ham, *The Lie*, p. 80.
4. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 86.
5. LaHaye, *Understanding Bible Prophecy for Yourself*, p. 14.
6. Morris, *History of Modern Creationism*, p. 96.
7. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, [1890] 1999), p. 70.
8. Ibid., p. 120.
9. Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 79
10. G.B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans [1980], 1997), p. 62.
11. Milton Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, p. 18.
12. Eugene Peterson, *Reversed Thunder: The Revelation of John & the Praying Imagination* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1988), p. 23.

Appendix B – Common Objections to a Local Flood

1. What may be new in the Noahic covenant is the fact that God hands the responsibility to punish murder over to lawful civil rulers. God

judged Cain personally for killing Abel, but after the flood he tells his people through Noah to judge murder. God's authority is delegated to rulers. This appears to be a new development. According to this understanding, the Noahic covenant marks progress in the *maturity* of God's people to govern themselves under God. For a fuller investigation of this view, see the sermon titled "Garden Echoes" by Tim. Martin in the *God's Garden* sermon series available online at: <http://www.truthinliving.org/index.php?pr=SerGRD>

2. Preston, *Who is this Babylon?*, p. 266.
3. *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 2 (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 280.
4. "Sea Gypsies See Signs In the Waves" <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/03/18/60minutes/main681558.shtml>.
5. A similar *non sequitur* is often employed regarding flood geology. Young-earth creationists often claim that since geology documents evidence for floods in various parts of the world, there must have been a global flood. Apparently, no major flood could have ever happened in planet Earth's history except Noah's!

Appendix C – Overview of Old-Earth Creationist Views

1. Arthur Custance, *Without Form and Void*. Available online at: <http://www.custance.org/Library/WFANDV/index.html#TableofContent>.
2. See Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, pp 147f.
3. Ross & Archer, *The Genesis Debate*, p. 123.
4. Robert C. Newman & Herman J. Eckelmann, Jr., *Genesis One & the Origin of the Earth* (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 1977).
5. David Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth* (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 2006)
6. This approach is captured in the title of a new book by Hugh Ross, *Creation as Science: A Testable Model Approach to End the Creation/evolution Wars*.
7. Ross & Archer, *The Genesis Debate*, p. 125.
8. Ross, *Creation and Time*, p. 69.
9. Irons with Kline, *The Genesis Debate*, p. 217.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 218.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 218.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

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Notes

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